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The National Nurse Act of 2011

Posted on [January 11, 2012](#) by [Brian Klepper](#)

Brian Klepper



On December 15, [Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson](#) (TX-30) introduced [HR 3679, The National Nurse Act of 2011](#).

The legislation, co-led by [Rep. Peter King](#) (NY-3), would elevate the existing Chief Nurse Officer of the US Public Health Service to **the National Nurse for Public Health**, a new full time leadership position that can focus nationally on health promotion and disease prevention priorities.



Teri Mills, a Certified Nurse Educator at Portland Community College in Oregon and President of the National Nursing Network Organization (NNNO), introduced the idea of a National Nurse in a 2005 NY Times op/ed. Here is an excerpt from that article.

...Nurses are considered the most honest and ethical professionals, according to a recent Gallup poll. It's the nurse whom the patient trusts to explain the treatment ordered by a doctor. It is the nurse who teaches new parents how to care for their newborn. It is the nurse who explains to the family how to comfort a dying loved one.

Now, I'm not saying that a National Nurse will become a household name immediately. But given all that's at stake – the health of a nation – it seems to me that we should at least give nurses a try.



Teri Mills, MS, RN, CNE

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Here's what I'd have the National Nurse do. She or he would highlight health care education through 15-minute weekly broadcasts that would also be available on the Internet. The emphasis would be on prevention: how to have a healthy heart; how to raise your teenagers without going crazy; how to avoid being swept into the growing tide of obesity.

The Office of the National Nurse would yield benefits in a multitude of ways. The informational programs would decrease dependence on a health care system that is not only expensive but at times inaccessible, especially for those who lack insurance or live in rural areas. Through the office, nurses could sign up for a National Nurse Corps that would organize activities to enhance health in their communities. A National Nurse would give public recognition to the valuable work that nurses perform each day; if we're lucky, the National Nurse would help stem the nursing shortage by attracting people to the profession.

Ms. Mills is right. Physicians may drive care, but nurses are on the front line with patients delivering it. Nurses are among our most capable and under-appreciated professional resources. Patients respect and respond to them.

Against a backdrop of overwhelming chronic disease and other maladies, why not give nurses the national visibility and respect that is commensurate with the trust that patients give them. Kudos to Ms. Mills for spearheading this effort, as well as to Anne Llewellyn, former President of the Case Management Society of America and another wonderful nurse educator, for alerting me to the National Nurse.

If you're a nurse (or someone else) who wants to support this project – including help in contacting your US Representative to co-sponsor - contact teri@nationalnurse.info.

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About Brian Klepper

Brian Klepper is a health care analyst and the Chief Development Officer of WeCare TLC onsite clinics.

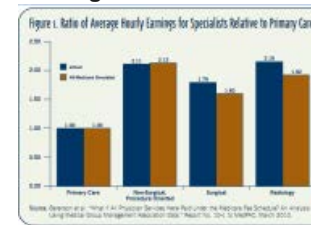
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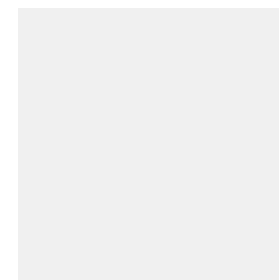
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January 11, 2012 at 10:54

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January 12, 2012 at 09:43

National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners Supports the National Nurse Act

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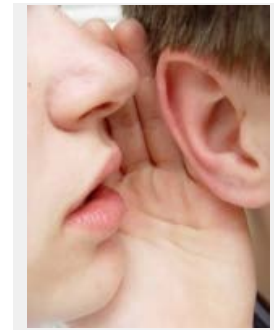
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