

**OR Manager Conference****Health care reform and the 'Golden Age' of nursing**

**P**erspectives on health care reform vary widely, and some view it negatively. But Kathleen Sanford, DBA, RN, CENP, FACHE, believes it will provide nursing with new opportunities—along with new challenges.

Sanford, senior vice president/chief nursing officer at Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI), Englewood, Colorado, will share her perspective during a general session at the OR Manager Conference September 23-25 at the Gaylord National Resort in National Harbor, Maryland, near Washington, DC.

With the emphasis on keeping people well, health care reform offers an opportunity for clinical staff to make a difference, says Sanford, who directs quality and patient safety initiatives, clinical operations improvement, leadership development of clinicians, and clinical information technology at CHI.

She believes perioperative nurses will become more collaborative, working more with nurses on the unit and perhaps developing a longer-term relationship with patients.

As a young nurse, Sanford says, she had an experience that taught her the value of always doing what is right for the patient. Told that the physician should never be questioned, Sanford says she did question a large dose of gentamicin ordered for a pediatric patient. Because the physician reprimanded her, she gave the drug. The dose was 10 times the amount the patient should have received, and while she was unable to ascertain any immediate damage, she knew his hearing would need careful monitoring during well child visits.

"Learning to stick up for my patients was challenging in a physician-driven culture. It was my first big medical error, and I made it out of my own desire not to be yelled at," she notes. "When faced with an issue like that, your discomfort is not what is important—what's right for the patient is what matters."

CHI facilities are already using Lean management, scheduling technology, and checklists, but they always strive to improve. At one facility, for example, staff nurses discovered they were opening several items listed on physician preference cards that weren't being used, so they refined their procedure to reduce waste.

With a goal of becoming known for its outstanding nursing care, CHI is helping nurses move into the future, Sanford says. CHI's Clinical Leadership Development Program, which started about 2 years ago, includes training for chief medical officers, chief nursing officers, and front-line managers at its facilities nationwide.

"Everyone's job will change, and we don't know how yet," Sanford observes, but she is optimistic.

"It's a 'golden age' for users of health care, and it's a wonderful time for all of us to be practicing. I don't think everyone understands that we're about to have a transformational change—one that is for the good of patients. It's an exciting time because we're going to be doing what's right for patients—and thus what's right for nursing." ♦

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*Kathleen Sanford, DBA, RN, CENP, FACHE*