

Dated: November 8, 1996.
 William W. Wiles,
Secretary of the Board.
 [FR Doc. 96-29232 Filed 11-8-96; 2:37 pm]
 BILLING CODE 6210-01-P

FEDERAL RETIREMENT THRIFT INVESTMENT BOARD

Sunshine Act Meeting

TIME AND DATE: 8:00 a.m. (EST);
 November 18, 1996.

PLACE: 4th Floor, Conference Room,
 1250 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

STATUS: Open.

MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED:

1. Labor Department audit briefing.
2. Approval of the minutes of the October 21, 1996, Board meeting.
3. Thrift Savings Plan activity report by the Executive Director.
4. Review of KPMG Peat Marwick audit reports:
 - (a) "Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration Review of the Policies and Procedures of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board Administrative Staff."
 - (b) "Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration Review of the Thrift Savings Plan Billing Process at the United States Department of Agriculture, National Finance Center."
 - (c) "Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration Review of Backup, Recovery, and Contingency Planning of the Thrift Savings Plan at the United States Department of Agriculture, National Finance Center."
 - (d) "Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration Review of Capacity Planning and Performance Management of the Thrift Savings Plan at the United States Department of Agriculture, National Finance Center."
5. Semiannual review of status of audit recommendations.
6. Quarterly investment policy review.
7. Annual ethics briefing.

CONTACT PERSON FOR MORE INFORMATION:
 Thomas J. Trabucco, Director, Office of External Affairs, (202) 942-1640.

Dated: November 6, 1996.
 Roger W. Mehle,
Executive Director, Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board.
 [FR Doc. 96-29124 Filed 11-7-96; 4:42 pm]
 BILLING CODE 6760-01-M

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Agency for Health Care Policy and Research

Proposed Research Agenda

AGENCY: Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, with the National Institute for Nursing Research and Health Resources and Services Administration, Division of Nursing.

ACTION: Notice of request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (AHCPR), the National Institute for Nursing Research (NINR), and the Division of Nursing (DN) of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) invite comments and suggestions of priority research topics related to the impact of nurse staffing on the quality of care in hospitals. These comments and suggestions will be considered by AHCPR, NINR, and DN of HRSA in planning for future research initiatives to benefit health care for the public and the health of the nation. Comments and suggestions on the proposed research agenda will be considered by the three Agencies in developing research priorities, but they will not be responded to individually.

DATES: Comments and suggestions must be postmarked by December 30, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and suggestions should be submitted to Kelly Morgan, Program Analyst, Center for Primary Care Research, Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, Suite 502, 2101 East Jefferson Street, Rockville, Maryland 20852. Respondents should provide a clear rationale and supporting evidence of the importance of the suggested topic.

All responses will be available for public inspection at the Center for Primary Care Research. Telephone 301-594-1357 ext. 1335, weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In response to a congressional directive, the Department requested the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to conduct a study on nurse staffing levels in hospitals and nursing homes. The IOM issued a report in January 1996, *Nursing Staff in Hospitals and Nursing Homes—Is It Adequate?*¹ (the Report). The Report notes a paucity of objective research on the relationships among restructuring, nurse staffing, and quality in hospitals. One of the recommendations of the

Report is that the National Institute of Nursing Research and other appropriate agencies fund scientifically sound research on the relationships between quality of care and nurse staffing levels and skill mix, taking into account organizational variables. The Report further recommends that NINR, along with AHCPR and private organizations, develop a research agenda on staffing and quality of care (See page 122 of the Report).

In July 1996, AHCPR, DN (HRSA), and NINR jointly convened a group of research experts to discuss methodological issues and key research questions on nurse staffing and quality of care in hospitals. Also discussed were selected outcomes from a conference held by the American Academy of Nursing in June 1996, sponsored by AHCPR, the American Nurses' Association, and the American Organization of Nurse Executives, entitled "Outcome Measures and Care Delivery Systems."

Nurse Staffing

Research efforts in this area will require refinement and standardization of conceptual as well as operational definitions of variables such as nurse staffing level and nursing skill mix. Included in this process must be an evaluation of the characteristics of the nurses providing care, such as level of education and psychological factors (e.g., nurse satisfaction with work). What nurses actually do (clinical vs administrative vs other duties), how nursing care is provided (staffing models used in each unit), and organizational characteristics (such as management or leadership style) are also important considerations.

Quality of Nursing Care

The concept of health care quality is extremely complex and usually includes a consideration of the structure and process as well as the outcomes of care. Research focusing on nurse staffing and quality of care in hospitals may, therefore, be expected to include an evaluation of the organization and delivery of nursing care in the hospital setting.

Proposed Research Agenda

Based on the expert discussions, the IOM Report, and a review of the published literature, the overarching questions to be addressed by research related to nurse staffing and quality of care in hospitals are: What is the contribution of nursing to the quality of care in hospitals, and what are the cost implications of this contribution? Within this area, a high research priority

¹ Wunderlich, Gooloo S. & Davis, Carolyne K. (1996). *Nursing Staff in Hospitals and Nursing Homes—Is It Adequate?* Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.