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October 2008

To: Schools of Nursing

The North Carolina Nurses Association Council on Nursing Informatics (NCNA-CoNI) is issuing a statement supporting basic informatics competencies for all nurses, including computer literacy skills in the areas of administration, communication, data access, documentation, education, monitoring, privacy/security and basic desktop software.

Informatics competencies allow individuals to use computer technology to accomplish tasks including using clinical applications to provide and document patient care, basic word processing, and communicating via email. Nurses with basic computer literacy skills allow nurses to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate and use information in the course of providing excellent care.<sup>1</sup>

In November 1999, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) released the first report "*To Err is Human: Building A Safer Health System.*"<sup>2</sup> which estimated that as many as 98,000 patients die as the result of medical errors in hospitals; these findings underscored the importance of dramatically improving the information technology infrastructure to support a 21st century health system.<sup>3</sup> These series of reports have galvanized the healthcare industry to rapidly incorporate information technology in the healthcare setting. However, without the core competencies listed above, nurses' risk their practice being compromised or their skills becoming outdated, which may result in losing their place in the workforce.

NCNA CoNI strongly recommends inclusion of these competencies for nurses in the Nursing Scope and Standards of Practice and advocates strongly for the inclusion of these basic information competencies in nursing curricula, the availability of continuing education programs in basic informatics competencies, and workplace educational opportunities offered in basic informatics competencies. This three tiered approach maximizes the opportunities for new nurses to gain the necessary skills and also offers opportunity for experienced nurses to add these skills needed for their practice. Please consider these recommendations as you support the inclusion of nursing informatics competencies in your organization.

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<sup>1</sup> American Nurses Association (2008). *Nursing Informatics: Scope and Standards of Practice*. Silver Spring, MD: Nursebooks.org.

<sup>2</sup> Kohn, LT, Corrigan JM, Donaldson MS, (2000). Committee on quality of health care in America, Institute of Medicine. *To Err is Human: Building a safer health system*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

<sup>3</sup> Crossing the Quality Chasm: the IOM Health Care Quality Initiative available at:  
<http://www.iom.edu/CMS/8089.aspx>.