

## **Future of Nursing: 2020-2030 Q&A**

### **Dr. Mary Wakefield, PhD**

Throughout her career, Mary Wakefield has focused on applying nursing expertise to health policy. Recognizing the significant contribution that nurses can make through public policy, she worked in senior positions in federal government, including eight years in the United States Senate as Chief of Staff to North Dakota Senators.

Most recently, Dr. Wakefield was asked to serve as a temporary Senior Counselor to the Director of the HHS Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an executive position that began August 2022 and completed at the end of February 2023. Prior to this work, Dr. Wakefield was asked to serve on an interim basis as Counselor to the Secretary of HHS in order to lead efforts related to Unaccompanied Children at the US-Mexico border.



In 2015, Dr. Wakefield was appointed by President Obama to serve in the Deputy Secretary position of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, making her the highest-ranking nurse in the U.S. government and the first nurse to hold this senior executive position. She led strategic Department-wide initiatives in key health policy areas, with a particular focus on programs for underserved populations. Additionally, she had management oversight for the Department, which had a \$1 trillion budget and 80,000 employees. She also represented the United States at international meetings on issues ranging from health professions education to ensuring access to quality care.

Earlier, Dr. Wakefield served as the HHS Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration. As the first nurse ever appointed to this senior executive position, she directed over 80 health programs ranging from organ transplantation to maternal and child health services. She led major initiatives to strengthen the health care workforce, including nursing, and to increase access to primary care.

Federal policymakers and others continue to seek her health policy expertise.

Dr. Wakefield has an enduring commitment to educating next generation nurses, having taught hundreds of nursing students at undergraduate and graduate levels. She currently serves as Visiting Professor at the University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing.

Dr. Wakefield is a member of the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine, IOM), and co-chaired the Consensus Study on the Future of Nursing 2020-2030.

She was the only nurse appointed to the IOM committee that produced the landmark reports *To Err is Human* and *Crossing the Quality Chasm*. She co-chaired the IOM committee that produced the report *Health Professions Education a Bridge to Quality* and chaired the committee that produced the report *Quality through Collaboration: Health Care in Rural America*.

Dr. Wakefield has served in nursing leadership positions including the boards of Sigma Theta Tau International and the American Academy of Nursing. Her contributions to health care include serving on the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, Chairing the HHS Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's National Advisory Council, participating as a member of President Clinton's Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality in the Health Care Industry, serving as a member of HHS/HRSA's Office of Rural Health Policy's National Advisory Committee and as a member of the Commonwealth Fund's Commission to Create a High Performing Health System.

Dr. Wakefield is a recipient of numerous awards, has presented at national and international conferences and was named a Living Legend by the American Academy of Nursing.

Her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing is from the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota and her Masters and Doctoral degrees in Nursing are from the University of Texas at

Austin. Having started her career in high school as a nurse's aide in her rural hometown hospital in Devils Lake North Dakota, Dr. Wakefield views nurses' opportunities to impact health care as unlimited.