Recently, nursing has focused a lot on the future. Part of that focus is a result of the Institute of Medicine (IOM, 2010) report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. Another part of that focus is probably precipitated by the context in which we are living today. We don’t want more taxes, Medicare cuts, the debt ceiling elevated, or Social Security touched, and, as nurses, we don’t want funding that supports nursing education and research tampered with. In addition, we anticipate dramatic changes as a result of the Accountable Care Act, the number of baby boomers retiring every day, the number of “old old” people potentially or actually needing care, and the innovations technology and atypical thinking bring us.

Clearly we need to be able to think about the future in an organized and creative way if we wish to be prepared for what nurses really can do to lead change and advance health. I propose The Wise Forecast Model©. This is a three-step process that can be applied to any consideration we may wish to make.

When faced with thinking about “what next,” we must first learn widely. Because there is so much to learn just within nursing, let alone the broader perspective of health care, we tend to limit our learning. Yet, one of the strategies futurists suggest is to read broadly. Read something you wouldn’t normally consider reading. What do you learn from that experience? Talk with someone from a totally unrelated discipline. What do you learn from that? Read a novel, see a movie, or watch a TV show that isn’t part of your normal routine and then ask yourself what you learned. The point is that sometimes our answers (or at least potential answers) reside in a discipline unrelated to ours. The “accidents” often make more sense than the logically thought-out plans. (Consider the story of the invention of the Post-it® Note, which can be found at www.ideafinder.com/history/inventions/postit.htm.)

Next, and I think this is a critical step, think wildly. Because we are so used to making logical decisions based on evidence, it is sometimes difficult for us to “just let go” and, at the risk of being thought foolish, think in illogical or creative ways that cause us to create really wild solutions to some issue we see facing us. For example, when we originally thought about pet therapy, we had cute little dogs and cats in mind. Then we found that children with vestibular and other disturbances often benefited from riding horses. Someone took that risk of thinking differently and now it doesn’t seem far-fetched.

The last step is to act wisely. After we have examined innumerable possibilities and thought as wildly as we could, we have to sift things down to a specific and wise plan of action. Because we did the broadness and wildness up front, however, we might choose a wise course of action based on the most creative considerations possible.

This three-step process should allow us to determine how we are going to meet the challenges of the IOM report, meet the intense demands for our services, and use our talents to their fullest so that we provide the best care for the most people at the most reasonable cost with the best outcomes. We can do it!

The Wise Forecast Model©:
Learn Widely.
Think Wildly.
Act Wisely.

REFERENCE