

***Ukiah Valley  
Medical Center***



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**International Nursing Expert Visits  
Ukiah Valley Medical Center**

Internationally known expert on professional nursing, Dr. Maria W. O'Rourke, RN, DNSc, FAAN, CHC, recently visited Ukiah Valley Medical Center (UVMC). Dr. O'Rourke's expertise stems from her work on rewriting the California Nursing Practice Act of 1974, which is the body of California law that mandates the scope of practice and responsibilities for Registered Nurses (RNs). She published the first paper on its implementation, which continues to serve as a guide to the profession in the appropriate use of the professional RN.

Dr. O'Rourke spent three days on the UVMC campus, instructing nurses in the professional role development program that she created called "The O'Rourke Professional Role Development Program." The educational program provides core content about the professional role and its application to the professional RN role.

"Nursing is a very powerful and beautiful role that needs to be used effectively within the interdisciplinary team," said Dr. O'Rourke. "This organization [UVMC] is investing in the education of their nurses and developing a positive culture."

Forty-one UVMC RNs participated in the program from February 28 through March 2.

"The first class was a strong group of clinical nurse experts and new graduates, a cross section chosen to represent nursing in the hospital," said UVMC Vice President for Patient Care Carolyn Kozik, RN, MSN. "Those nurses were just a few of the individuals who have contributed, have leadership ability and a sense of themselves. Of course, you can't take the whole hospital all at once."

A key principle of the program is professional role competence as identified by the California Nurse Practice Act, which includes the nursing scope of practice. This program is applicable to students, faculty, staff...essentially all who practice or want to practice professional nursing.

“When a nurse understands the scope of practice, he or she can do the full spectrum of professional nursing more effectively. Scope of practice defines what nurses can do,” says O’Rourke. “Role competency directly relates to patient safety. How you practice influences the outcomes. The higher the level at which you practice, the better the outcomes.” Want to improve patient satisfaction? O’Rourke contends that a key factor that contributes to patient satisfaction is the important care coordination role that the RN plays in care delivery.

“The program reinforced the importance of being role-oriented and using critical thinking skills,” said Angel Slater, RN, a nurse from the Medical/Surgical (Med/Surg) unit who has worked at UVMC for seven years. “It gave me good insight—we should think about the whole picture and always make our patients number one. It’s not about us [nurses], it’s about our patients and we need to remember that all the time.”

“Maria reiterated that we’ve gotten too obsessed with tasks instead of our actual role,” said Starr Openshaw, RN, Intensive Care Unit (ICU). “It also refreshed a lot of important issues that need to be brought to the forefront of our profession—professionalism, teamwork and respect.”

Another major focus of Dr. O’Rourke’s program is interdisciplinary communication and decision-making.

“All members of the care team—doctors, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapist, dieticians—have an obligation to communicate about what’s best for the patient. Nursing takes a critical role in initiating and coordinating the patient information that comes from that conversation. Transferring information about the patient’s condition is part and parcel of the business of nursing,” says Dr. O’Rourke.

“Maria’s program helped clarify the responsibility that RNs have to manage the patient’s care, to make sure that all aspects come together,” said Brad Morrison, RN, MPH, charge nurse on Med/Surg. “It’s our responsibility to make sure that everyone’s working together and communicating.”

“The professional nursing role is a decision-making role. The person in the decision making role is the person who determines what to do and who’s going to do it,” says O’Rourke. “A key [element of the program] is to clarify the important decision making role of the profession, irrespective of one’s particular field such as nursing or physical therapy, and that this decision making authority is a privilege.”

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ATTENTION MEDIA: Photos available upon request.

*Ukiah Valley Medical Center is part of Adventist Health, a not-for-profit, faith-based health system operating in California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington. Founded on the Seventh-day Adventist heritage of Christian health care, Adventist Health is comprised of 20 hospitals with more than 3,100 beds, 18,800 employees, numerous clinics and outpatient facilities, 16 home care agencies and three joint-venture retirement centers. For more information, visit [www.uvmc.org](http://www.uvmc.org) or [www.adventisthealth.org](http://www.adventisthealth.org).*