

REIMAGINING NURSING HOMES IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

On the heels of the release of the independent Commission on Safety and Quality in Nursing Homes report, commission member [Terry Fulmer](#), PhD, RN, FAAN, President of The John A. Hartford Foundation (JAHF), co-authored a [commentary in *NAM Perspectives* exploring ways for nursing homes to forge a path forward](#) to better protect residents and staff from COVID-19 and future pandemics. Fulmer's co-authors are [Christopher F. Koller](#), president of The Milbank Memorial Fund and [John W. Rowe](#), the Julius B. Richmond Professor of Health Policy and Aging Health Policy and Management at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.

The crux of the issue, the authors argue, is that current nursing homes were not designed for—and cannot financially withstand—infectious disease outbreaks, particularly when their staff are often too few in number and inadequately paid, protected and trained.

“Nursing homes were never, and will never, be equipped to deal with infectious disease outbreaks unless major changes are made, including redesign and payment reform. These facilities and their dedicated workforce have borne the brunt of COVID-19 and need actionable solutions to prevent dire outcomes from continuing to happen,” said Fulmer.

Strategies that should be considered to improve the quality of care include better matching residents with the most appropriate care settings (i.e., providing more supports for home-based care as an alternative to institutional care; exploring long-term care wings within hospitals for shorter-term rehabilitation patients), conceiving new kinds of nursing home settings; increasing staff pay and training; and restructuring financing for nursing home care.

JAHF is supporting the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine as it embarks on a [national consensus study to guide federal nursing home policy and practice for the next decade](#) and beyond. Experts will conduct an extensive review of the science underpinning how the nation delivers, finances, regulates and measures the quality of nursing home care.

“The [independent Commission report](#) released last week provides useful information for the development of this next needed effort to identify the policies and practices required in the future,” said Fulmer. “I am heartened by how many diverse experts and organizations are committing to finding solutions and improving nursing home care in the United States.”

For more information on The John A. Hartford Foundation's nursing home efforts, please visit johnahartford.org.

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