Does this report recommend nurses replace doctors?
- This report does not recommend for one professional to replace another. Rather, its recommendations advocate for the health of our communities. With shortages across all sectors of health-care professions, it is essential we create health-care teams that are empowered to meet needs in more comprehensive ways.

Quality of care
- Evidence-based research has shown that advanced practice nurses can and do provide core, primary-care services as effectively as physicians. Nurse practitioners can contribute to meeting the growing demand for primary care services, particularly in underserved communities. When advanced practice nurses increase capacity in primary care, this allows physicians to focus on specialized care.

Nursing shortage issues
- The current downturn in the U.S. economy, specifically the California economy, has led to an easing of the nursing shortage in our area. But this is a short-lived effect and the need for highly skilled registered nurses will continue well into the future. The reasons for this include:
  - The economy is bringing many retired nurses back into the workforce
  - Nurses who planned to retire are holding on to their position
  - Some part-time nurses have taken full-time positions or additional shifts to provide more income for families
  - Hospitals are treating fewer patients because many people are delaying procedures or not seeking care due to loss of insurance and/or higher costs of health care
  - Hospitals are feeling the impact of the economy, leading to downsizings and hiring freezes
- Changes in the employment patterns of current nurses, such as the aforementioned, are not adding new nurses into the workforce to fill positions. Yet, both private studies and studies conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show the continued growth in the health-care workforce, with registered nurses as the largest segment of that workforce. Nationwide, the nursing shortage could be nearly 500,000 by 2025 with a 40 percent vacancy rate.
- The nursing faculty shortage continues and has not seen any positive impacts due to the economy. In fact, in 2008 approximately 20,000 qualified nursing students were rejected by California nursing schools. The major contributing
factor to this was the lack of nursing faculty. An aging faculty means the faculty shortage will only become worse. Approximately half of nursing school faculty indicate they plan to retire within 10 years. It is not a simple matter of graduating more nurses today, but of graduating those who will educate nurses for countless generations. Without an increase of nursing faculty, the nursing shortage will become a chronic problem.

- Nurses who begin their career with a bachelor’s degree rarely choose to pursue a doctorate based on the relatively low faculty salaries in comparison to clinical practice and administrative salaries. Additionally, the nursing shortage has produced significant increases in salaries for nurses in clinical practice while faculty salaries have remained flat.

- Nurses considering higher education also face significant tuition costs and forego income for the years they spend pursuing their degrees. The heavy workloads in academia—teaching, research, clinical practice and supervision of students—also negatively impact decisions to pursue higher education and faculty positions.