The Affordable Care Act, which became law earlier this year, will usher in benefits and health coverage for millions of Americans. This means small business tax credits, health coverage for early retirees, and funding for scholarships and loan repayments for nurses, doctors, and other health care providers working in designated “health professional shortage areas.” It also means that more than 30 million formerly uninsured individuals will enter the system by 2019.

The well-documented shortage of primary care providers has required creative thinking by entrepreneurial organizations. Enter the University of Minnesota School of Nursing and the Center for Spirituality & Healing. The two have recently entered into a bold new partnership with Northwestern Health Sciences University (NWHSU) in Bloomington, an international leader in natural health care education, patient care, and research.

**COMMON GOALS**

NWHSU is home to the Bloomington Natural Care Center, an open clinic staffed by NWHSU faculty serving patients in the Twin Cities, and University Health Services, where services are provided to the student and faculty population by student interns who are monitored by NWHSU faculty. Beginning in September 2010, faculty from the School of Nursing will provide nurse-managed primary care at both clinics. It’s a great fit for the partners since both the University of Minnesota and NWHSU share common goals: expanding education and research in integrative health, as well as patient access to clinical services.

We want to switch the paradigm from disease management to wellness management that, in the long run, will keep people healthier.

**A PARADIGM SWITCH**

“We wanted to explore a more holistic approach to patient care,” says Thomas Clancy, PhD, MBA, RN, a clinical professor at the School of Nursing and director of faculty practice. “This partnership leverages both our nursing expertise and the integrative health focus of the Center for Spirituality & Healing.”

Clancy believes that the collaboration also fits very well with President Obama’s health reform initiative, which calls for nurses to be used as the front line in disease prevention. “We want to switch the paradigm from disease management to wellness management,” he says. “In the long run, it will help people stay healthier.”

Kimberly Zemke, MS, RN, agrees. “Due to the shortage of primary care physicians in this country, it is a well know fact that nurses – specifically advanced practice nurses – are already providing competent and knowledgeable primary care to people of all ages.” Zemke, a doctoral candidate and clinical assistant...
professor who also serves as director of professional development at the School of Nursing, has been instrumental in establishing the partnership.

SERVING COMMUNITY NEEDS
Both clinics will be run like the Pillsbury House Integrated Health Clinic, which has served residents of the Powderhorn and Central neighborhoods of south Minneapolis since 2007. That clinic, also in collaboration with NWHSU, brings together students, providers, and faculty advisors from different healthcare disciplines to serve the needs of the community.

The Pillsbury House clinic is led by Georgia Nygaard, DNP, RN, CNP, clinical assistant professor and director of the family nurse practitioner area of study at the School of Nursing. Nygaard will also be the lead faculty at the two clinics on the NWHSU campus. She and other nursing faculty will diagnose and treat patients, and refer them to the appropriate providers of chiropractic care, acupuncture and Oriental medicine, massage therapy, and primary care services.

ADDED VALUE
Michael Wiles, DC, MEd, provost and vice-president for academic affairs at NWHSU, notes that discussions about solutions to primary care shortages tend to focus on using teams that include physician assistants and nurse practitioners. Natural care providers are usually not mentioned. “It is becoming rare, if not impossible, for health providers to work in isolation,” he says. “We believe that there is a tremendous potential in adding the licensed natural health care professions to these primary care teams. These teams featuring interprofessional practice and education are a reality. Graduates from our natural health care programs need to have the skills and ability to work within these integrated environments.”

The two clinics will provide clinical education opportunities for nursing students and those in massage, acupuncture and Oriental medicine, and chiropractic from NWHSU. It is also anticipated that the clinics will serve as practice sites for health coaching students from the Center for Spirituality & Healing as well as students enrolled in the new Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) in Integrative Health and Healing.

A NEW MODEL OF CARE
“The Center for Spirituality & Healing has a long history of successful collaboration with NWHSU in research and education,” says director Mary Jo Kreitzer, PhD, RN, FAAN. “For many years, we have yearned for an opportunity to develop and offer a new model of care, one that expands the primary care model to include integrative, holistic approaches to care. Patients are demanding it and frankly, so are students! NWHSU is the right partner and this is the right time to be boldly and creatively exploring new ways to improve the health of Minnesotans.”

Tony Baisley is the communications director at both the School of Nursing and the Center for Spirituality & Healing.