

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

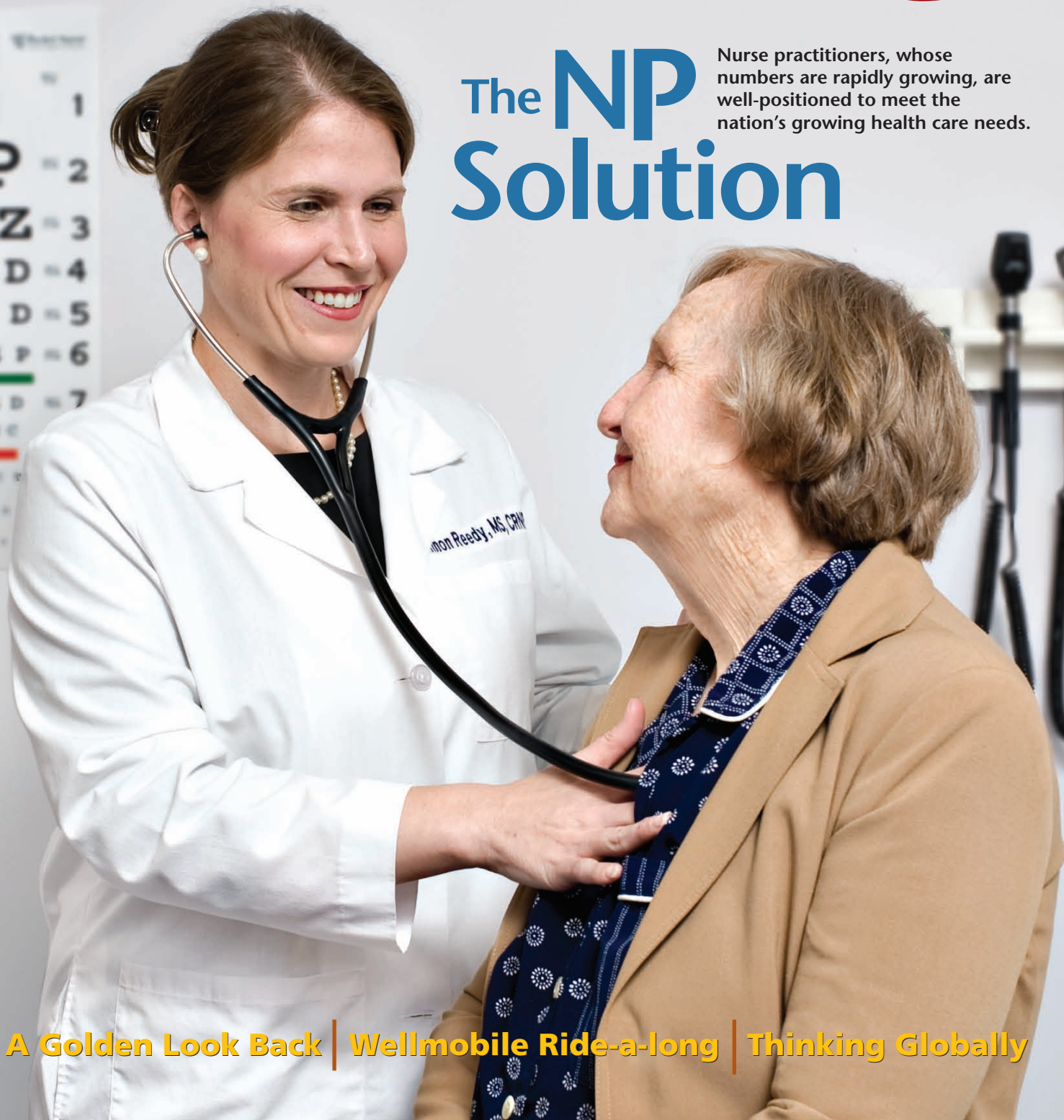
# Nursing

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## The NP Solution

Nurse practitioners, whose numbers are rapidly growing, are well-positioned to meet the nation's growing health care needs.



**A Golden Look Back | Wellmobile Ride-a-long | Thinking Globally**



A nursing student tests AccuNurse, a hands-free, eyes-free technology, in one of the School's simulation labs.

## A Beta Test Bridge to Better Care

ONE DAY in the near future, nurses who work on specialized intravenous teams won't need to leave a patient's bedside in order to attend to pages from floor nurses, enter data into a patient's medical record, and catch up on paperwork. Using "AccuNurse"—a headset and wearable computer equipped with voice recognition software that allows the wearer to directly input information into a database—these nurses will be able to do their jobs faster and more efficiently while improving patient care.

AccuNurse, which uses hands-free, eyes-free technology, could revolutionize how nurses care for hospital patients. And through a collaboration between the School of Nursing and Vocollect Healthcare Systems, which manufactures AccuNurse, the School's students had the opportunity to beta test the product last summer and provide valuable insight to the company about its design and function.

The testing involved 10 students with a wide array of experience and levels of education. Using the School's clinical simulation labs, the students ran through eight different scenarios using AccuNurse in which they played the roles of patient, IV nurse, and floor nurse. They then provided feedback to the company, ranging from questions about how the headset should be worn with a ponytail to what kind of audio prompts it should be giving the wearer.

This was the first time that the School's Nursing Informatics program had been involved in such a collaboration with a vendor and the experience was of great value to the students and the School, says assistant professor Marisa Wilson, DNSc, MHSc, RN-BC. "It was exciting to expose the students to a technology that they had never been exposed to and for them to have input into this product so that it could be effectively and efficiently used by nurses," she says.

The collaboration came about last year during the annual Summer Institute in Nursing Informatics Conference, a gathering of some 600 nursing informatics professionals held at the School, which created the world's first master's program in nursing informatics in 1988. AccuNurse was already being used in more than 30 long-term care facilities, but the company was looking for avenues to retool the product for an acute care setting and wanted to beta test it. When representatives from Vocollect, a vendor at the conference, took a tour of the clinical simulation labs and saw the wide variety of nursing experience in the School, they realized the potential to test their product there.

"From our perspective, the collaboration was a very good thing," says Amar Kapadia, director of new ventures for Vocollect. "It gave us the ability to get a fairly good understanding of how nurses think, how health care works, and what works and doesn't work for the nurses," he says. "Obviously, we still had to test it at the hospital, but this got us 60 to 70 percent there."

Using the information gathered from the students, Vocollect refined AccuNurse and pilot tested it at Butler Memorial Hospital, north of Pittsburgh, with impressive results. The product will be on the market soon.

Debra Wolf, an associate professor of nursing at Slippery Rock University and a Vocollect consultant, was at the School for the beta test last summer and praised the collaboration. "I consider this to be one of the missing factors critical for continued support of health care, because it provides a bridge between academia, acute care facilities, and vendors," she says. "If we don't have the three organizations working together in a collaborative manner, we will not meet the needs of clinicians caring for patients at the bedside."

Wilson says she hopes the partnership with Vocollect will continue and that the School can develop similar relationships with other vendors. "This School has a unique position with the simulation labs, the diversity of our nursing students, and the richness of the nurse researchers that we have here," she says. "We want to be involved in more collaborations like this because it gives our students an opportunity to have a say in the very products that they are going to use in the marketplace." —MB