

Career Highlights – Barbara Nichols DNSc (hon) MS RN FAAN

The professional career of Barbara Nichols DNSc (hon) MS, RN, FAAN spans four decades with a focus on leadership and policy making in professional associations and related health organizations. Throughout her career she has been a solid champion for the need to value diversity in all of its forms and a leading advocate for ethnic minority inclusion in all aspects of the health professions.

She is the former Chief Executive Officer of CGFNS International, whose expertise provided credential validation, scope of practice standards and licensure of nurses and health professionals globally. In 2011 she began serving as a national Diversity Consultant to Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and contributed to the national implementation of the Institute of Medicine Report: “The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity.”

Barbara Nichols has been a consultant on credentials assessment and diversity to the Office of Minority Health, and the US Departments of Labor, State and the Department of Homeland Security. She was the first African American nurse in 100 years to be President of the American Nurses Association and the Wisconsin Nurses Association respectively. In 2016 she became the Executive Director for the Wisconsin Center for Nursing where she has led nursing workforce initiatives that included the development and publication of Wisconsin’s RN and LPN workforce surveys and workforce planning.

Ms. Nichols is also the recipient of five Honorary Doctoral degrees and numerous awards for her pioneering work and sustained contributions to the delivery of health care in urban and rural settings. Most recently, she was the 2015 recipient of the City of Madison, Wisconsin’s The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award for her social justice advocacy and 2022 inductee to the American Nurses Association (ANA) Hall of Fame.

She holds a Master of Science in Behavioral Disabilities, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a Baccalaureate in Nursing from Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, a diploma from Massachusetts Memorial Hospital School of Nursing. She is married and the mother of identical twin sons, one daughter, and ten grandchildren.