Foreword

In 2001, the Institute of Medicine released the report, *Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century*, calling for fundamental change in the American health care delivery system. The IOM report identified six aims for improvement: health care should be safe, effective, patient centered, timely, efficient, and equitable. The IOM report laid out a vision of a future health system that is carefully and consciously designed to respond to the needs, preferences, and values of patients *and* one that ensures that patients are fully informed, retain control, and participate in care delivery, whenever possible.

HealthePeople: Transformation to Person-Centered Health Systems further refines this vision and provides a blueprint for moving forward. Focusing on people—as consumers, patients, enrollees, and members—the report makes a compelling case for the creation of a "virtual health system" that encompasses the full range of services available to assist people in managing their health and heath care.

The goal is better health, but the critical enabler is information technology. Building on the extraordinary e-health accomplishments of the Veterans Health Affairs, the editors have brought together contributors from public and private sectors alike. These authors provide an ambitious, but achievable, agenda for establishing an electronic infrastructure that includes personal health records for individuals, electronic health records for providers, and the necessary information standards and supports to enable appropriate health information exchange.

The "virtual health system" will fundamentally alter the interactions among the members of a care team, and the relationships between health care providers and patients. There is little doubt this new health system will open up many opportunities to improve the health of populations and individuals, but the journey will not be an easy one.

The contributors to this book recognize the magnitude and complexity of the change process, and the importance of attending to both technological and human factors. Building a virtual health system will require talented and committed leadership at all levels of the health system. Through their collective knowledge and experience, the editors and authors of *HealthePeople* provide a wealth of information and excellent guidance to all who are involved in the journey of *Crossing the Quality Chasm*.

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