

BIO

Maria W. O'Rourke, RN, PhD, FAAN, FAAHC

Dr. O'Rourke is currently CEO and President of Maria O'Rourke & Associates, a consultancy that focuses on professional practice issues. In addition, she is a Full Clinical Professor of Nursing at UCSF in the Healthcare Administration and Inter-professional Leadership Program (HAIL). In 2015, she was the Inaugural Distinguished Scholar in Residence at Honor Health in Scottsdale.

She is renowned for her pioneering, seminal work on professional role clarity. She began this effort in the mid 1960's when defining the work of nursing as a professional practice discipline and clarifying the role of the RN as a key decision maker on the interdisciplinary team were critical to advancing nursing as a profession. She carried this effort into the legislative arena where she was instrumental in rewriting the California Nursing Practice Act in 1974. Dr. O'Rourke then published the first paper on its implementation which served to guide the profession, regionally and nationally, in the appropriate use of the RN as a professional.

Over the past four decades, her body of work in the field has culminated in the creation of a theoretically grounded practice model called Role Based Practice that serves as a foundation for professional role competence, aligning appropriate role relationships among professional, technical and assistive roles and for improving performance and practice outcomes.

Dr. O'Rourke has held many key leadership positions including Clinical Nurse Specialist, Staff Development Educator, Faculty, Director of Staff Development and Research, Chief Nurse Executive, CEO, Chief Strategy Officer and Healthcare Consultant. Throughout her career she has led numerous patient safety and quality care initiatives, helping organizations connect professional role competence to error/risk reduction, patient safety, and improved outcomes.

Although her roots are in nursing, her work transcends the discipline and serves as a foundation for inter-professional leadership. She continues to be committed to helping members of the interdisciplinary and interprofessional team better understand professional practice and the pivotal decision making role professionals play on the team, with particularly expertise on the role of the RN. Her extensive work in this field, she has garnered several honors and awards, including the Sigma Theta Tau - UCSF Alpha Eta Inaugural Leadership Hall of Fame in 2014 and STTI Alpha Eta Chapter's Margretta Madden Styles Award for her leadership, vision and advancement of nursing in 2015.