

# Nursing recruitment and retention

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## Nursing Recruitment and Retention

To be a good nurse, you have to be a physically strong and emotionally stable person, and you have to be able to think on your feet. Though nursing is not an easy profession, it is very rewarding. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the nursing shortage and nursing retention and recruitment strategies for facilities. The nursing shortage crisis is caused by nurse burnout, an aging Registered Nurse (RN) population, not enough nurses graduating due to a shortage of nurse faculty, and an increase of patients as “baby boomers” retire, grow older, and experience age-related illnesses.

There are many challenges involved with the nursing shortage, including recruiting RN's and then being able to retain those RN's in order to provide adequate, safe staffing. Ensuring appropriate staffing is necessary for safe and competent patient care, as well as a healthy work environment. Once a nurse has been recruited, the challenge becomes how to keep them due to the high cost of nurse turnover. Many facilities offer benefits, such as mentoring programs, tuition reimbursement, and longevity bonuses, to help keep nurses from leaving.

## Nursing Shortage Defined

The nursing shortage poses a significant problem for nurses, especially with job satisfaction and patient care. Most nurses use a holistic approach to patient care, meaning they care for the patient's mind, body and spirit. This approach, however, takes more time and with the nursing shortage nurses feel like they are not adequately staffed to be able to give good, patient care. According to the American Hospital Association (AHA) there has been a

nursing shortage since as early as 1999. In 2010, the United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that there were 2,737,400 registered nurses, with an expected 26% increase of nursing jobs by 2020.

So what are some contributing factors that affect the nursing shortage? First, the aging baby-boomer population will have a major influence on the healthcare system and especially nursing. Currently the average age of a baby-boomer is 50-70 years old and will soon demand more age-related healthcare services, which leads to another contribution to the nursing shortage. In 2008, the average age of RN's was 46, with many nurses expecting to retire between the ages of 60-65. Finally, faculty shortages at nursing schools limit the number of graduating nurses.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing website stated, " U. S. nursing schools turned away 75,587 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2011 due to insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints." (para. 3) The nursing shortage cannot be fixed if we do not have enough students to replace those nurses who quit or retire.

### Effects of Burnout

In addition to these causes, burnout often strikes nurses due to the high levels of stress, understaffing, increased workload and mandatory overtime. Burnout is a condition that shows itself as being fatigued all the time, irritability, insomnia and depression. According to the article Nurse Burnout and Patient Satisfaction, employers have an increased cost in personnel due

to the fact that burnout leads to employees being absent, late to work, and an increase in the turnover rate. (Vahey, Aiken, Sloane, Clarke, & Vargas, 2010, para. 6)

### Nursing Retention and Recruitment Strategies

In order to ensure safe staffing, hospitals need to focus on recruiting nurses and retaining their current nursing staff. To help build better teams and increase staff satisfaction, management should engage employees in nurse recruitment and nurse retention. The cost of recruiting and retaining nurses, however, can be expensive for facilities, especially high nurse turnover rates. The Online Journal of Nursing reports that the cost of turnover, for each nurse, can range between \$22, 000 to over \$64, 000. (Bland & Gates, 2007, para. 3).

Factors that contribute to the cost of turnover include orientating and training new staff and covering for loss of staff, either thru travel nurses or overtime with current staff. As it can take years to develop the skill and training needed to work in specialty units, the loss of experienced nurses is especially costly.

The retention of employees is dependent on reducing turnover. One positive aspect of the nursing shortage is that it has provided nurses the opportunity to find an employer that will meet their needs. Many things factor into the retention of a single nurse, among other things, nurses want safe workplaces with adequate staffing be able to give quality patient care, the flexibility to manage their work schedule around their home life, and a decent salary.

Organizations need to cultivate a work area in which staff want to work in order to promote staff retention.

Organizations also cannot afford to simply react to the workforce shortage. Attracting qualified nurses is one of the most important steps that can be taken to ensure a high standard of care. There are many different ways that organizations can utilize to recruit those qualified nurses. An online article for the American Organization of Nurse Executive's publication Nurse Leader listed the top sources of new hires, and the top three included employee referral, organization's website and general job boards. If staff satisfaction were made a priority from organizations, referrals from current employees could attract qualified, seasoned nurses. Other recruitment strategies include offering incentives, like salary, flexible schedules, education incentives and tuition reimbursement. (Brooks & Caffey, 2008)

## Conclusion

Today's society of aging baby boomers and nurses, faculty shortage due to low enrollment in nursing schools and the higher expectations of medical care are all helping cause today's environment of nursing crisis. By ensuring that the needs of the hospital and nurses are met this leads to better patient care and better patient care leads to better patient satisfaction scores.