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NYUCN STUDY POINTS TO POOR MANAGEMENT AND STRESSFUL WORK AS THE LEADING CAUSES OF RN ATTRITION

Findings crucial toward estimating and reducing turnover rates for new RNs

A study, published in the September 2007 issue of the American Journal of Nursing (AJN), provides new insight into the work experiences of newly-licensed RNs that may help reduce the turnover rate of hospital nurses.

“A shortage of 340,000 RNs is projected by 2020,” warns Christine Kovner, PhD, RN, FAAN, professor at New York University’s College of Nursing and lead author of the study, “Newly Licensed RNs’ Characteristics, Work Attitudes, and Intentions to Work.” The national study is the first to explore attitudes and experiences among newly-licensed first-time RNs in their first 18 months following graduation.

“Of those who had already left their first job the most common reasons cited were poor management, followed by stressful work. When asked whether they would choose the same job if they were free to go into any type of job, 41.5% answered they would want another job,” said Kovner.

“Therefore, it is vital that we understand the factors that promote the retention of newly-licensed RNs as well as factors that lead to the high turnover rates among them. We plan to continue surveying these RNs for two more years and develop predictive models of turnover, based on our findings,” added Kovner.

Dr. William Greene from NYU’s Stern School of Business, a study co-investigator, provided the econometrics expertise to interpret the data. “They are using some innovative economic modeling techniques, which is going to create a powerful data set for them,” remarked Greene.

“This study helps to establish baseline data about a population that is particularly important both to the nursing profession and our health care system,” said Carol S. Brewer, PhD, RN, associate professor in the School of Nursing at the University at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY, who co-authored the study. “There are both costs and benefits when individuals leave organizations,

as well as when they move within a health care system; however, as long as newly-licensed RNs stay in nursing, the nursing community will not have lost its invested human capital.”

The study included a survey that was mailed to a random sample of new RNs in 35 states and the District of Columbia. A total of 3,266 nurses completed the survey with a response rate of 56%. Data were gathered in four areas: respondent characteristics, work-setting characteristics, respondents attitudes about work and job opportunities. Respondents who were not working were asked about their reasons for being unemployed, if applicable.

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