

Opinion

ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

Nurse and faculty shortage a major challenge for health care

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National Nurses Week is May 6-12 and it is a good time for us to take note of our increasing shortage of nurses and nurse educators in Florida and across the country.

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the nursing shortage in the United States is projected to rise as baby boomers age and the need for health care increases.

Employment of registered nurses is projected to grow 19 percent from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This shortage directly impacts the supply and demand of registered nurses in the clinical work environment and the ability of these nurses to deliver high-quality patient care.

One of the challenges faced by deans and directors of schools and colleges of nursing is to identify strategies that will encourage faculty to stay.

I recently drafted an article titled "The Nursing Faculty Shortage: Predictors of Job Satisfaction and Intent to Stay in Academia: A Review of the Literature," which was published in the *Journal of Nursing and Care*. Through my research, I found that the career satisfaction and success of nursing faculty have been threatened by heavy workloads and the multiple role expectations of teaching, service and scholarship.

In lieu of the retirement predictions of the aging nursing faculty, it is imperative that nursing administrators provide supportive environments in which resources are available so that the quality of nursing education can be sustained. Additionally, workload and promotion policies must be reviewed, and the discrepancies in salaries between academia and the clinical environment must be addressed to improve faculty members' job satisfaction and intent to stay.

My research findings support the notion that as the level of education increases, the professional identification, and the intent to stay of nursing faculty will also increase. Given the fact that the doctoral degree is the preferred preparation for faculty in higher education, it is possible that monetary or financial restraints could influence the decision-making process of nursing faculty to obtain higher degrees necessary to teach. Although the federal government has made great strides in providing opportunities for nursing faculty to receive financial assistance through scholarships and loan repayment programs, nurse leaders must strive to keep nursing education at the forefront of the political arena so that these loans will continue to be available to assist in relieving the financial burden of student loans.

Additionally, part-time employment may be an attractive incentive to encourage current faculty to remain in academia past retirement age, and mentoring should be used as a strategy to retain new faculty with limited teaching experience. Finally, it should be noted that by improving the factors that promote job satisfaction, the quality of nursing education will be sustained and the retention of current faculty will be increased.

With the increasing shortage of registered nurses, it is essential that we focus on increasing the number of qualified nursing faculty at nursing schools throughout the nation.

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