



Nursing Research and the Current Nursing Workforce Shortage

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Introduction

In 2025, the profession of nursing is at a critical juncture, facing a continuing workforce shortage that threatens healthcare systems and patient safety across the United States and beyond. The COVID-19 pandemic, along with an aging workforce, have placed systemic challenges for healthcare institutions that need to be addressed immediately. The American Nurses Association, along with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the need for new Registered Nurses (RNs) continues to outpace supply. There is an anticipated need for over one million new nurses by the year 2030 to cover the aging and retiring workforce. In addition, many RNs are leaving the bedside for less strenuous and stressful positions or leaving the profession all together. Reasons cited for this include burnout, moral distress, lack of support, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2022 and 2025, over 138,000 nurses left the workforce [1].

Another issue is the lack of prepared, qualified nurse educators to prepare new graduates for the field of nursing. It is estimated that in 2023, United States nursing schools turned away over 65,000 qualified applicants due to lack of faculty/clinical placement sites. There is an 8% vacancy rate of full-time faculty positions across programs [2]. Nurses working full time in hospital or clinic settings often command higher salaries than nurse faculty, especially those working in rural or smaller academic settings. This combined with the aging of nurse educators leads to the ongoing nursing faculty shortage.

Nursing research, which is evidence-based, is often used to identify solutions to current issues within the profession. Evidence-based

practice is the current state of practice, and is evolving and changing to keep up with technology, advances in healthcare and medicine, and promotes patient quality and safety. Nursing research has shown that nursing residencies can and do improve the quality of the first year of nursing, reducing the transition to practice adverse events that may derail a new nursing career. The use of both qualitative and quantitative nursing research into issues such as staffing ratios, nurse residencies, preventing burnout, and policy advocacy can help identify solutions to the ongoing nursing crisis facing the United States. By conducting and disseminating information from current and future studies, nursing can hopefully find a way forward to ensure that future generations of nurses and patients will continue to benefit from safe, effective care.

By implementing and disseminating current and future nursing research, nurses can find solutions that can impact policy to bring hope to the nursing community. Nursing scholars often implement interdisciplinary approaches, to not only document trends, but to drive change. Nursing science is needed now more than ever to support and secure a resilient, supported workforce capable of delivering high quality care amid evolving healthcare demands.

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