Georgia’s Nursing Workforce at a glance

Current data suggests a looming nursing shortage larger than any in this country since the ’60s. Despite a current easing of the shortage due to the U.S. economic recession, the national nursing shortage is projected to grow to 260,000 registered nurses by 2025. Absent effective action, Georgia faces a nursing shortage of nearly 50,000 RNs by 2020, according to the University System of Georgia’s Center for Health Workforce Planning & Analysis. Hospitals are hiring more BSN- and MSN-educated registered nurses, in response to evidence demonstrating higher quality care, lower readmission rates and lower patient mortality. Recent data suggests that the number of young nurses entering the workforce has increased, but formal succession planning is necessary to bridge the gap between the two largest sectors of the nursing workforce – young nurses (23-26) and nurses rapidly approaching retirement (50 and older).

Georgia’s Nursing Workforce nearing a retirement exodus

- Dr. Peter Buerhaus, who is considered a national expert on the nursing shortage, pointed to a rapidly aging nursing workforce as a primary contributor to the projected shortage.
- According to data from National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses, RNs who are 50 and older comprised 44.7 percent of the total U.S. RN population, compared with 41.1 percent in 2004 and 33.4 percent in 2000. The percentage of RNs who were 60 years and older increased from 13.6 percent in 2004 to 15.5 percent in 2008.
- According to the 2010 Profile of Georgia’s Registered Nurse Workforce, which was compiled by the USG’s Center for Health Workforce Planning & Analysis, 60 percent of Georgia’s RN workforce is age 50 or older.

Nursing School Enrollment not growing fast enough due to lack of capacity

- According to a 2012-13 American Association of Colleges of Nursing report, U.S. nursing schools turned away 79,659 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2012 due to insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors and budget constraints.
- In a 2011 American Association of Colleges of Nursing survey, a total of 1,088 nursing faculty vacancies were identified in 603 nursing schools with baccalaureate and/or graduate programs across the country.
- The University System of Georgia’s 2010 Profile of Georgia’s Registered Nurse Workforce states, “A shortage of faculty members is consistently indicated by Georgia’s nursing programs as a significant concern for increasing enrollments.”

The Demand for Registered Nurses increases

- In April 2011, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that the health care sector of the economy continues to grow, despite significant job losses in recent months in nearly all major industries. Hospitals, long-term care facilities and other health care settings added 37,000 new jobs in March 2011, the biggest monthly increase recorded by any employment sector. Nurses are the largest segment of the health care workforce.
- In October 2010, the Institute of Medicine released its landmark report, The Future of Nursing, initiated by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The IOM report states there is “declining demand for LPNs in hospitals.”
- The IOM Report recommends the creation of a national infrastructure for the collection and analysis of health care workforce data. Georgia needs a nursing workforce data center to ensure that current data on the Georgia’s nursing workforce is timely and publicly available.
- In July 2010, the Tri-Council for Nursing cautioned stakeholders about declaring an end to the nursing shortage. The downturn in the economy has lead to an easing of the shortage in many parts of the country, a recent development most believe to be temporary.
- Increasingly, hospitals are hiring few LPNs, opting for a workforce of RNs who can practice at a higher level of complexity.
References

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