



**The Nursing Workforce in Canada**  
**Results from the National Nursing Sector Study & National Profile of Graduating Nursing Students**  
*Report from the Research Forum held July 4, 2005*

**The Nursing Workforce in Canada: Issues and Implications from the National Nursing Sector Study**

**Presenters: Dr. Linda O'Brien-Pallas and Dr. Gail Tomblin Murphy**

The project goal was to create a long-term strategy to ensure an adequate supply of skilled and knowledgeable nurses, to meet the health care needs of Canadians. Some of the recommendations generated by this study include:

- Create a stable supply of nurses.
- Develop a pan-Canadian approach to nursing education in collaboration with the provincial, territorial and federal governments to prepare the number of qualified graduates needed to meet workforce needs.
- Enhance data collection to improve health human resource planning.
- Use a health human resource planning framework based on population health needs to plan for nurse resources.
- Use evidence-based practices to inform staffing decisions including retention and recruitment decisions.
- Implement effective and efficient mechanisms to address workload issues and improve patient, nurse, and system outcomes.
- Create work environments that maximize patient, nurse, and system outcomes.
- Improve and maintain the health and safety of nurses.
- Develop innovative approaches to expand clinical experiences in nursing education.
- Maximize the ability of nurses to work to their full scope of practice.

A Research Synthesis Report was released in May 2005 which outlined the findings from each of the 15 research steps, the highlights of which are:

- When it comes to the formal education capacity of nurses, it was found that 50% of LPNs and 60% of RN schools report insufficient resources for current enrolment.
- Nurse immigration increased between 1999 and 2002. The 15,528 RNs admitted to Canada in 2001 represented 21.8 % of migrants listed with health care occupations.
- Inter provincial mobility increased between 1990 and 1997. The highest immigration rates were in Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Ontario. The highest migration rates were to jurisdictions with higher salaries. A majority of the migrants were under 25 years followed by the 25 to 34 age group.
- The high proportion of nurses in older age groups represents a “demographic time bomb” with an expected decline in the workforce size for all three nursing groups. A surplus in any of the three regulated nursing groups is unlikely in the future.

*During the discussion portion of the presentation, several questions from the audience were addressed including retirement forecasting for Registered Nurses.*

*In response it was noted that Canada wide for Registered Nurses, by 2006 if they stay to age 65 the profession will lose 30,000 of 230,000 nurses, if they leave the profession at 55 the loss will jump to 64,000 nurses in 2006.*



## **The Supply of Nurses. National Report on the Profile of Graduating Students: Provincial Employment Preferences and Employer Practices**

**Presenter: Dr. Andrea Baumann**

This research arose from the decision of the Chief Nursing Officer of Ontario, to strike a part-time/full-time subcommittee from the Joint Provincial Nursing Committee to look at the issue of full-time/part-time. Researchers concluded from the findings:

- Part-time/temporary work rose to new heights during restructuring.
- Human resource strategies have to focus on retaining and creating a balanced workforce.

Several recommendations are based on the findings to date:

- Create innovative solutions e.g. Nursing Resource Team (Hamilton Health Sciences)
- Convert absentee dollars into full-time employment.
- Have more progressive human resource practices.
- Set employment targets over a five-year period.
- Career development should start at the nurse's first position.
- Organizational structural adjustments are required to create more full-time jobs.

Researchers surveyed new graduates in Ontario, and a longitudinal approach was taken in order to be able to compare results from year to year. The study is also going nationwide and for the first time this spring other provinces were included. Participants were contacted by e-mail, mail or face to face. As of 2005 there were 37 Registered Nurse programs and 23 Registered Practical Nurse programs.

- From the initial survey in 2004, 41 per cent of graduates got jobs right away; 61.2 per cent were working part-time/casual.
- In the final survey, there was an 89 per cent employment rate: 31.7 per cent full-time, 57.1 per cent part-time/casual.
- Desire for full-time work (RN Graduates): in 2003/2004 79.3 per cent and in 2004/2005 69.7 per cent.
- Intent to seek employment in the US: in the 2004 initial survey, 26 per cent of respondents were considering employment in the United States and in the 2004 final survey; 3.5 per cent of respondents had found employment in the United States.
- Border city mobility: 62.6 per cent of respondents from South West Ontario identified seeking employment in the United States compared to 25 per cent of their peers.

*During the discussion portion of the presentation, several questions from the audience were addressed including why are there fewer full-time offers, the relationship between area of practice and full- or part-time work and preference of speciality areas for new grads?*

- *Hiring depends on the organizational hiring cycles and cyclical demands.*
- *Nurses aren't necessarily hired into their area of choice.*

The Research Forum was hosted by the Nursing Health Services Research Unit (NHSRU), in co-operation with the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) Research Unit and the Nursing Secretariat. Participants from the MOHLTC including those from the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Ontario Nurses Association, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO) and the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario (RPNAO) were in attendance.

This report was prepared by the NHSRU.

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