

MEDIA RELEASE

Too Few Internationally Educated Nurses Are Entering the Workforce

Study highlights the challenges they face

Hamilton, ON (December, 2006) — Ontario has the second highest percentage of internationally educated registered nurses in Canada, but many of those entering the province never become employed as professional nurses, a McMaster University study says.

Internationally Educated Nurses in Ontario: Maximizing the Brain Gain, highlights the challenges Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs) face in becoming licensed and entering the workforce in Canada.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care commissioned the study authored by Dr. Jennifer Blythe to determine what helps or hinders IENs from entering the Ontario healthcare system.

The research team from McMaster's Nursing Health Services Research Unit (NHSRU) interviewed IENs and other stakeholders such as educators, employers and members of nursing and migrant support organizations. They found that IENs face barriers to entering the workforce at all stages of the migration process from the time they enter Canada to starting their new position.

Dr. Andrea Baumann, an investigator on the study and Co-director of NHSRU, McMaster site, says the failure in the system goes right from the migration interview to integration into the workforce.

The majority of IENs suffer delays and difficulty in registration. An estimated 40 per cent never complete the registration process. "We need to make sure IENs are provided with the right information on licensing, educational options and the labour market before they enter Canada," says Baumann.

Lack of information from the Canadian government prior to migration was a hurdle for immigrants with limited knowledge about nursing in Canada.

According to the study, for IENs who require additional qualifications to be eligible to practice nursing, there are various bridging/upgrading programs with different opportunities and restrictions. Most programs are relatively new and are funded on a temporary basis. If more IENs are to enter the workforce there should be a permanent and consistent funding model for upgrading and bridging nurses into the system.

The researchers have made recommendations for several groups including the government, licensing and professional bodies, educators, employers and other researchers.

The report is available on the Nursing Health Services Research Unit web site www.nhsru.com.

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