

Research Background

Early in the decade, the proportion of part-time (PT) nurses in health care facilities was alarming. This adversely affected the retention of a stable workforce. Since 2007, the NHSRU McMaster site has been evaluating the Ontario government's strategic investment to stimulate full-time (FT) employment for new nursing graduates in Ontario. An employment website was created for the NGG where employers post temporary FT positions for new graduate nurses. The employing agency provides a temporary FT position for up to 6 months (an extended orientation and mentorship program). Since 2007, 8123 new graduates and 250 employers have participated in the program. The hospital sector continues to have the highest rate of involvement, with over 70 per cent of hospital corporations taking part since its inception.

The funding for this initiative was \$85.8 million dollars, which represents a 0.2% expenditure of the provincial health budget

**-Ministry of Finance,
2010.**

This summary presents selected highlights from the Employment Integration of Nursing Graduates report. The research team led by Andrea Baumann includes Mabel Hunsberger and Mary Crea-Arsenio. The full report is available on our website www.nhsru.com.

Employment Integration of Nursing Graduates: Evaluation of a Provincial Policy Strategy, Nursing Graduate Guarantee 2009-2010

A three year evaluation of the Nursing Graduate Guarantee (NGG) demonstrates the effectiveness in integrating new graduates into the health care system (Baumann et al., 2008, 2009, 2010). The research demonstrated a continuous upward trend in full time (FT) employment for new graduates since the introduction of the NGG in 2007. The 2009-2010 new graduate survey data (Baumann, et al, 2010) was validated by the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) annual membership statistics. The new member data showed a 71 per cent FT employment rate for the Registered Nurse (RN) category and a 36 per cent FT employment rate for the Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) category (CNO, 2010).

In early 2010, the preliminary results of the new graduate survey indicated FT employment for new graduate RNs was on a similar upward trend (Baumann et al., 2010). However, the results demonstrate that FT employment for RPNs has not been as consistent as the RN category. In summary, there is an upward trend in FT employment. A number of factors are considered when examining employment trends and workforce integration of new graduate nurses. The existing labour market conditions are key as well as the supply of graduating RNs and RPNs in any given year.

A number of factors must be considered when examining employment trends of new graduate nurses:

- The overall supply of RNs and RPNs fluctuates from year to year. The number of job positions available at any given time varies in relation to the ability of employers to absorb new graduates (there are 1198 potential health care employers in Ontario).
- Once an employer has participated substantively in the NGG, over time the workforce in that particular organization will stabilize.
- Finally, an increase in the number of internal PT employees applying for FT positions limits the number of postings available for the NGG.

Registered Nurses:

- In 1994 there were 108,495 RNs registered in Ontario, according to the CNO (2010b)
- Between 1994 and 2001 there was a loss of 7563 RNs. However, in 2001, this trend began to reverse.
- From 2001 to 2006, there was an increase of 8102 RNs, which resulted in a full recovery of RNs lost during the 1990s and early 2000s.
- Between 2006 and 2007, there was again a slight decrease of 161 RNs,
- Followed by an increase of 2141 RNs over the next two years (2007-2009) (CNO, 2010b).

Registered Practical Nurses:

- By contrast, RPN supply in Ontario has been slower to recover since the restructuring of the Health care system in the 1990s (CNO, 2010c).
- In 1994, the CNO reported 34,221 RPNs registered in Ontario.
- Between 1994 and 1995, there was an increase of 96 RPNs.
- Beginning in 1995 and for the following 10 years, there were continued losses in the number of RPNs in Ontario. From 1995 to 2005, there was a decrease of 4902 RPNs across the province.
- In 2006, this trend began to reverse and for the next four years, the CNO reported an increase of 4218 RPNs (CNO, 2010c). This increase, however, has not yet reached a level of replacement of RPNs lost in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Recommendations

These recommendations are intended to increase FT employment of newly graduated nurses and smooth the progress of their integration into the workforce:

- The employment initiative should be retained to encourage FT employment during this challenging economic time and it is also recommended the Ministry focus on strategies to encourage employer participation among public institutions identified as high need sectors (i.e., long-term care, community) and geographical contexts (i.e., rural).
- It is also recommended that the NGG employment initiative be combined with other initiatives similar to the integrated model of the Ontario Nursing Workforce Alliance (ONWA).
- Stakeholders identified specific areas for improvement to enhance implementation of the initiative:
 - First, introduce a system whereby an automatic email is sent to employers to remind them to check the activity of their postings. Some employers do not visit the website frequently and often miss when new graduates have applied to their posting.
 - Second, provide employers with notification of their acceptance into the program. Currently employers do not know if they have met the requirements of the budget submission until the money is flowed for each new graduate matched. Employers would like to know that their request has been accepted before they hire the new graduate.
 - Finally, provide more timely notice of the continuation of the initiative to employers in subsequent years.



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