Nursing Shortages Essay, Research Paper

Nursing Shortages

In healthcare today, one major issue is the shortage of nurses. In a poll conducted by the American Health Association, labor and staffing issues was the second biggest concern of top healthcare officials. Nurses are known for their long hours, low pay, and very stressful jobs. As a result of this, enrollment in nursing schools has declined for the fourth straight year. With a declining amount of nurses, and a hospital industry that is constantly expanding, the need for nurses is rapidly growing. Also with less and less nurses going to school the older nurses are just getting older. The average age of nurses is 44.3 years old as opposed to 40.3 in 1980. There is no one to fill their position when they retire, or decide to go to a less demanding profession with much more flexible hours. If the hospital is able to recruit and find nurses for these available openings the cost of turnover is extremely expensive. The average cost of turnover for one nurse is between 50,000 and 60,000 dollars. The expensive nature of turnover isn t the only problem related to it. Turnover can result in lower productivity because the hospital is trying to find a replacement and when they do find the replacement that person still needs time to learn the system.

Our economy has also now left the door wide open for women to explore other jobs. Nurses typically have to take care of patients in a hospital 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. With most nurses having kids at home work outside of a hospital is very appealing to them. Home health care, long-term care, and ambulatory services are easy alternatives for a less stressful and sometimes higher paying job. This also gives nurses more time to balance work and family. A poll from the AMA said that 60% of nurses are now working outside of hospitals. Also, well over 40% of women are now entering medical school as opposed to when nursing seemed to be the only alternative for women if they wanted to enter the healthcare industry.

I think there are a couple of things that can be done to help this shortage. First, healthcare officials should go to high schools and hold seminars. At least get the idea of nursing into their minds. Also, hospitals should have an on-site child care center so working nurses have somewhere to leave their kids without paying hundreds of dollars to take them somewhere else. Hospitals could make their nursing schedules as flexible as possible and not force them to work overtime. If the nursing profession can get rid of the label of low paying and extremely stressful then more and more people might consider becoming a nurse. I also saw somewhere that some states are considering nursing school tuition reimbursement policies kind of like the military does with high school students. The hospitals ability to offer job stability and offer training and educational advancement will ultimately result in less turnover which will save them money and they will have the desired amount of nurses.