

Today's Registered Nurse Workforce

- An American Hospital Association (AHA) report released in June 2005 notes that there are more than 168,000 vacant hospital positions nationwide; 126,000 are for nurses. (1)
- In 2006, the current nursing shortage entered its ninth year, becoming the longest lasting nursing shortage in the past 50 years. (2)
- There are approximately 2.8 million registered nurses (RNs) in the U.S.; 80% are active. (3)



- The nation's nursing shortage is projected to grow to between 500,000 and one million nurses by the year 2020. Every state will experience a shortage of nurses by the year 2015. (4) (5)
- The U.S. Department of Labor has identified registered nursing as the top occupation for job growth through the year 2012.(6)
- New graduate RN turnover is currently between 35% and 60% within the first 12 months of employment and 57% at two years of hire, *Journal of Nursing Administration* (2004). (7)
- Direct costs of filling a vacated RN position are estimated to be at least 100 percent of a new graduate RN's annual salary, according to a VHA survey conducted in 2002. (8)
- According to a 2002 study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, low RN staffing in hospitals is directly related to adverse patient outcomes, including patient complications and death. (9)
- The shortage has presented temporary staffing firms with record business, supplying 5% of nurses that work in hospitals nationwide and generating over \$7 billion a year in revenue. (10)
- According to a 2000 report released by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), 52 percent of working nurses were younger than age 40 in 1980; in the year 2000, only 31.7 percent of all working nurses were younger than 40. (11)
- Within 10 years, 40% of working RNs will be 50 years old or older, according to the international honor society of nursing, Sigma Theta Tau. (12)
- According to a 2002 study conducted by the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Research, each additional patient that is added to a RN's schedule increases the chance of preventable medical deaths by more than seven percent. (13)
- The difference between a RN caring for four or six patients at the same time results in a 14 percent increase in likely death for those patients; a RN caring for eight patients simultaneously translates to a 31 percent greater likelihood of dying. (14)
- Large patient to RN ratios were directly linked to a greater risk of complications after surgery and to higher rates of job dissatisfaction by nurses (University of Pennsylvania 2002 study). (15)
- If hospitals increased nurse staffing and hours of nursing care per patient, more than 6,700 patient deaths and four million days of care in hospitals could be avoided each year, according to a study published in the *Journal of Health Affairs*. (16)

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- According to a 2000 American Nurses Association (ANA) report, length of hospital stay, hospital-acquired pneumonia, postoperative infection, bed sores and hospital acquired urinary tract infections all dropped due to higher levels of nursing involvement in patient care. (17)

End Notes

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