

# Retaining Wisdom in the Nursing Workforce

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# Retaining Wisdom in the Nursing Workforce

## Learning Objectives:

- Discuss creative ways to encourage retired nurses who left clinical practice for awhile to rejoin nursing workforce
- Discuss creative ways to retain older and experienced nurses in the nursing workforce to decrease nursing workforce shortage



# Retaining Wisdom in the Nursing Workforce

- Average age of the RN population is 47 years and approaching their retirement age (Bureau of Health Professions, 2004)
- 650,000 new nursing jobs will be created over the next decade, but an estimated 450,000 nurses will be retired this period (Bureau of Health Professions, 2004)



## Retaining Wisdom in the Nursing Workforce

Increased needs for acute care and chronic care as 78 million baby boomers move to advanced ages which may exacerbate existing nursing workforce shortage even further (White House Conference on Aging, 2005)



# Retaining Wisdom in the Nursing Workforce

- Economic and social trends encourage more individuals to delay retirement to improve financial security (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2006)
- Economic and social trends also affect retired nurses decisions to consider returning to nursing workforce for financial security and/or professional satisfaction (Bureau of Health Professions, 2004)

# Retaining Wisdom in the Nursing Workforce

The study “Why retaining older and experienced nurses in the nursing workforce is a high priority?” by Brewer C. S., Kovner C. T., 2007:

- The study compared characteristics and work attitudes of RNs aged 50 and older with those of nurses younger than 50 at baseline and a year later. It also compared responses of older RNs working in nursing with RNs from the same age group working outside nursing or retired.
- In general, this comparison showed that older RNs were more satisfied, more committed to their organization and had less desire to quit than younger nurses.

# Retaining Wisdom in the Nursing Workforce

National initiatives by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and others to evaluate the outcomes of existing strategies to retain experienced nurses (RWJF, 2006; Larkin M., 2007; Brewer C.S., Kovner C. T., 2007)



# Strategies for Nurse Retention:

What are some strategies to retain these older and experienced nurses in the workforce?

- Retired and experienced nurses who left clinical practice for a while may need to refresh their clinical skills to rejoin the nursing workforce
- Retired and experienced nurses may need less physically demanding work responsibilities to retain them in nursing workforce



# Strategies for Nurse Retention: (cont.)

- Flexible work hours
- Supportive workplaces
- Social interaction with peers and clients
- Innovative new professional roles

# Strategies for Nurse Retention: (cont.)

- **More control over work settings**
- **Atmosphere of respect and participation in decision making**
- **Provide a career ladder**



# Strategies for Nurse Retention: (cont.)

- **Phased retirement**
- **Ergonomically friendly, safe and effective workplace**
- **Less physically demanding work**

## Examples of Innovative New Roles for Older and Experienced Nurses:

- Preceptor/Mentor
- Team builder
- Safety officer
- Patient educator
- Special project officer



# Examples of Innovative New Roles for Older and Experienced Nurses:

- Patient advocate
- Quality assurance specialist
- Evidence-based practice researcher
- Community liaison
- Relief nurse

# Innovative New Roles for older and experienced nurses:

- **Staff development officer**
- **Technology facilitator**
- **Discuss other ideas and thoughts of the participants**



# References

1. Bureau of Health Professions. (2004). Nursing Supply Model: Technical Report and User Guide. Report prepared by The Lewin Group for the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis.
2. Bureau of Health Professions. (2006). The Registered Nurse Population: Findings from the 2004 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses
3. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2006). Wisdom at Work: the Importance of the Older and Experienced Nurse in the Workplace.
4. Larkin M. (2007). Shortage Strategies: Retaining the Experienced Nurse. The Journal of Nursing Administration, 37(4):162-163
5. White House Conference on Aging. (2005). Executive Summary of the Final Report to the President and Congress.
6. Brewer C. S., Kovner C. T. (2007). Focus on Older Nurses May Be Key to Solving Nursing Shortage. The study published in the August issue of Policy, Politics and Nursing Practice.

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