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Why do nurse faculty intend to stay in or leave their jobs?

What is this research about?

Canada faces a shortfall of roughly 60,000 full-time Registered Nurses (RNs) by the year 2022. Several strategies to recruit and retain nurses have been implemented, but these strategies do not address all of the factors involved. Furthermore, the shortage of nurse faculty has been largely unaddressed. Not having enough nurse faculty limits the capacity to educate new nurses and to prepare nurses at the graduate level. Fifty two percent of Canadian nurse faculty are 50 years or older, and approaching retirement age. Few studies have focused on the problem of nurse faculty shortage and few strategies exist to promote nurse faculty retention.

The purpose of this study was to explore the reasons why nurse faculty wanted to stay employed in their current jobs. This study is the first phase of a larger study aimed at developing, testing and refining a model of factors that affect nurse faculty decisions to stay employed.

What you need to know:

This study explored the reasons why nurse faculty wanted to stay employed in their current job or leave. The intention of nurse faculty to remain employed is influenced by at least four categories of factors: personal characteristics, work environments, job content and external characteristics. Employers should target factors that they can modify to improve work environments and ultimately nurse faculty retention.

What did the researchers do?

Researchers conducted focus groups to explore reasons why nurse faculty intended to stay in or leave their current employment. A sample of nurses in faculty positions at colleges and universities throughout Ontario were invited to participate in these focus groups. A total of thirty seven nurse faculty took part in six focus groups. Each session was opened with the lead question: 'What factors in your work or life influence your decision to stay or leave your faculty position?' Researchers analyzed data



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What did the researchers find?

Researchers identified four categories of factors that influence nurse faculty decisions to stay employed in their current positions. Factors from each category motivating nurse faculty to stay in their jobs include:

Personal Characteristics:

- Age and closeness to retirement
- Marital status and having dependent children or older adults
- Health status, family circumstances and ability to balance life and work

Work Environment and Organizational Support:

- Quality of faculty leadership and the work environment
- Access to support personnel and resources
- Working status (e.g. full or part time) and opportunities for promotion

Job Content:

- Being able to work independently and having variety in job roles
- Having meaningful relationships and mentorships with students
- The ability to engage in research.

External Environmental Characteristics:

- Being unionized
- The availability of outside opportunities

How can you use this research?

This research may help college and university leaders to better understand the complexity of factors involved in nurse faculty intention to stay employed. This research can be used to influence and create retention strategies targeting these factors. Findings highlight the importance of providing supportive, competitive and fulfilling work environments. This research may help faculty leadership take action to:

- Support work-life balancing through flexible scheduling;
- Create opportunities for faculty collaboration;
- Support and provide resources to improve faculty workload and expectations.

Original Article:

To learn more about this study, we invite you to read the original research article:

Tourangeau, A., Thomson, H., Saari, M., Widger, K., Ferron, E.M. & MacMillan, K. (2012). Determinants of nurse faculty intention to remain employed. *Open Journal of Nursing* 2, 245-261.

About the Researcher

Ann Tourangeau is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Toronto, and an adjunct scientist at ICES. tourangeau.research@utoronto.ca

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