

Research paper

Nursing Shortage

Names

Institution

Date

Nursing Shortage

Identification of the Nursing Issue

The nursing shortage is one of the most significant crises in the field of nursing. Although nurses make up the single largest profession in the healthcare sector and spend the most time with patients, both developed and developing economies have struggled to meet the demand for nurses or adequately serve their healthcare systems (Huston, 2022). Nurses' critical role in patient safety, delivery of quality care, and patient-centered care mean that failing to eradicate the current nursing shortage crisis could have far-reaching ramifications throughout the healthcare sector.

Definition of Nursing Shortage

A nursing shortage is a situation where the supply of nurses is limited. According to Haddad et al. (2022), a nursing shortage occurs when the demand for nursing services exceeds the market supply. In other words, nursing supply occurs when the number of available nurses cannot adequately meet the needs of the patients, particularly at a point where new nurses joining the profession fail to sufficiently replace those leaving the profession or align with the rising number of patients (Huston, 2022). Nursing shortage forces hospitals to overwork the available nurses or to limit nursing care within their facilities.

Prevalence of Nursing Shortage

The nursing shortage is a chronic problem in the healthcare sector. According to Huston (2022), the nursing shortage became a health crisis in the 20th century. It was due to an imbalance between the available nurses and the exponential rise in the demand for healthcare services. Although there are currently 29 million nurses in the world and 3.9 million in the US, recent statistics show that 6 million additional nurses are needed to curb the current shortage of nurses, with more than a million being needed within the US healthcare sector (Haddad et al., 2022; Shah et al., 2021). The US healthcare sector is the most affected since it will need more than one million nurses in addition to the current workforce of 3.9 million to curb the shortage of nurses by 2026 (Bialous & Baltzell, 2020; Haddad et al., 2022).

Causes of the Nursing Shortage

One of the key causes of the chronic shortage of nurses is a high turnover. According to Haddad et al. (2022), the large number of nurses retiring or approaching retirement has created a significant crisis in the healthcare sector since the rate at which they are replaced remains low. This crisis is likely to worsen considering that

more than 33% of nurses are currently above 55 years and the average age of the nursing workforce stands at 44 years (Flaubert et al., 2021). The Institute of Medicine (IOM) further attributes the chronic shortage of nurses to the underutilization of existing nurses since their roles are limited compared to the scope of their training (Flaubert et al., 2021). Scholars also attribute the chronic shortage of nurses to the rising demand for healthcare, health awareness, and governments' commitment to providing quality patient care (Huston, 2022).

Effects of Nursing Shortage

The nursing shortage has numerous effects on the nurses and the patients they serve. Recent studies have associated nurse burnout within the US healthcare sector with the ongoing shortage of nurses (Shah et al., 2021). Experts also recognize the shortage of nurses as a leading cause of medical errors that have plagued the US healthcare sector, becoming a leading cause of deaths, comorbidities, and high cost of care (Flaubert et al., 2021; Haddad et al., 2022). The shortage of nurses causes dissatisfaction among overworked nurses and patients who report poor health outcomes (Haddad et al., 2022).

Proposed Strategy: Intervention from the Nursing Profession

One of the most effective solutions to the chronic shortage of nurses is to promote professional development opportunities. Promoting professional development opportunities will address the nursing shortage crisis by resolving the high turnover. Experts recommend providing professional development opportunities for youths by promoting nursing programs and encouraging continued learning among current nurses (Huston, 2022). Flaubert et al. (2022) agree that providing professional development opportunities will encourage more people to join the profession, increase the competence of existing nurses, and lower turnover among nurses.

How Professional Development Addresses the Effects of Nursing Shortage

Although promoting professional development opportunities can address all the effects of the nursing shortage discussed earlier, the solution would be more effective in resolving medical errors. Experts agree that better professional development opportunities will ensure that nurses possess sufficient skills, knowledge, and competence, ensuring that they provide high-quality services and adhere to patient safety standards (Haddad et al., 2022; Huston, 2022). As such, this intervention should be pursued as it could revolutionize the nursing sector.

Strategy

The proposed intervention will occur in two phases. The first phase involves promoting professional development opportunities like sponsored continued learning, training programs, and mentorships to nurses. The second phase involves providing incentives for the younger population to join the nursing sector. These incentives could include subsidized college fees, scholarships, and a promise of high salaries.

Rationale for the Strategy

There are many reasons why providing professional development opportunities can reduce medical errors. First, attracting more learners to nursing programs and promoting continued learning is consistent with the IOM's recommendations for the future of nursing (Flaubert et al., 2021). The approach will ensure that nurses acquire more knowledge, skills, and expertise required to serve their patients. These opportunities will also ensure that nurses are updated with emerging healthcare issues, their patients' dynamic needs, and current interventions (Huston, 2022). Eventually, this practice will promote better patient safety standards and lower the prevalence of medical errors.

References

Bialous, S. A., & Baltzell, K. (2020). The world needs 6 million more nurses: What are we waiting for? *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 103(1), 1–2. <https://doi.org/10.4269/ajtmh.20-0451>

Flaubert, J., Menestrel, S., Williams, D. R., & Wakefield, M. K. (2021). *The nursing workforce*. Treasure Island, FL: National Academies Press (US). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK573922/>

Haddad, L. M., Pavan Annamaraju, & Toney-Butler, T. J. (2022). *Nursing shortage*. Treasure Island, FL: StatPearls Publishing. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK493175/>

Huston, C. J. (2022). *Professional issues in nursing: Challenges and opportunities*. Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer.

Shah, M. K., Gandrakota, N., Cimiotti, J. P., Ghose, N., Moore, M., & Ali, M. K. (2021). Prevalence of and factors associated with nurse burnout in the US. *JAMA Network Open*, 4(2), e2036469. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.36469>