

New Survey Explores the State of the Nursing Profession

CHICAGO, May 6, 2014 – As nearly 3.5 million nursing professionals are celebrated during National Nurses Week, a new study from CareerBuilder finds that while the profession may be evolving, it remains a rewarding and satisfying career for the vast majority who enter it. Nearly all nursing professionals (93 percent) are satisfied with being a nurse and 85 percent are unlikely to ever switch careers.

But besides their passion for patient care, what do nurses want out of their careers, and how do they view the evolution of technology, policy, and education affecting their day-to-day roles?

The nationwide study – conducted on behalf of CareerBuilder by Harris Poll between March 11 and March 28, 2014 – explores changes to the nursing profession, differences between nursing settings, the value of various training and education programs, and the desired career paths of nursing professionals. Participants included approximately 900 U.S. nurses working full or part-time in hospital, ambulatory, home care, hospice, or long-term care/ skilled nursing settings.

“We’ve long known that the men and women who enter nursing are as essential to their organizations as they are to their patients. So it’s important that as the health care landscape shifts, their voices continue to be recognized by administrators and other industry leaders,” said Jason Lovelace, president of CareerBuilder’s health care division. “One of the biggest challenges for the industry is the need to make room for the tens of thousands of people who enter the profession each year while simultaneously satisfying health care organizations’ need for skilled, veteran nurses. The study made clear that while nurses feel traditional academic settings are working, mentoring and continuing education programs are a vital piece of individual career development and assist nurses’ ability to excel at efficient, compassionate patient care.”

The following are highlights from the study. A full report will be released in early June.

Changes in the Nursing Profession

- While direct patient care takes up 38 percent of a nurses’ time (more than any other function), 41 percent feel they are spending less time on patient care than five years ago / beginning of their career. A majority (52 percent) say there are spending more time on notes and documentation related to patient care than five years ago/ beginning of their career, while a third are spending more time on administrative tasks (33%).
- Fifty-seven percent of nurses think technology-based tools help them do their job more effectively; however, 46 percent think technology has made patient care more de-personalized.
- Nurses are generally not optimistic about how the Affordable Care Act will affect their work. Forty-seven percent feel the reforms will have a negative effect on the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of patient care and 31 percent think it will have a positive effect. Twenty-three percent anticipate the reforms will have no effect.

Nursing Career Paths

- About 4 in 10 nurses (43 percent) plan to stay in their current setting – e.g. hospital or ambulatory – for at least 5 years. Home care and skilled nursing professionals are the most likely to be currently looking for a new setting. Ambulatory nurses are the least likely to look for a new setting.
- Most nurses (54 percent) who want to move to a new area of nursing want to do so for a better work/life balance. Pay is the second leading factor (43 percent).
- Acute care hospitals are seen as the most rewarding nursing setting by 25 percent of nurses. A combination of acute, specialty, and ambulatory follows with 17 percent. Specialty care hospitals are seen as the most rewarding by only 4 percent.
- Many nurses appear content with never stepping into a management role. Thirty-seven percent of nurses have not worked in a management role and have no plans to.

Mentorship and Education

- Nearly-two thirds of nurses (63 percent) had a mentor assigned to help them “learn the ropes” when they began their nursing career. Virtually all (96 percent) who had a mentor said the person was helpful in some way.
- Forty-nine percent said that since they began their career the need for mentoring has increased; only 18

percent said the need has decreased.

- Informal, on-the-job training appears to be just as important as a nursing degree in terms of preparation for clinical demands. Forty-five percent said their degree prepared them very well for the job, while 51 percent said informal training prepared them very well.

- Entry-level education requirements are now tilted toward higher education. Forty-seven percent of nurses said their minimum requirement for beginning a nursing career was a bachelor's degree or higher. One-half of nurses practicing 15 years or less (51 percent) said a bachelor's degree or higher was the minimum requirement for beginning their nursing career, compared to 42% of nurses practicing for longer than 15 years.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder among 886 nurses employed full-time or part-time in a hospital, ambulatory, home care, hospice, or long-term care/ skilled nursing settings ages 18 and over between March 11 and March 28, 2014 (percentages for some questions are based on a subset, based on their responses to certain questions). With a pure probability sample of 886, one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 3.29 percentage points. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies.

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