

Bedside Nurses Retention Study

Future of Nursing WV Coalition

The Future of Nursing West Virginia (WV) Coalition conducted a Nursing Workforce Summit in 2017. The summit focused on five topics relevant to the state's nursing workforce with the topic of retention a key focus. A brainstorming session on the topic of nursing retention of currently licensed RNs resulted in the themes of onboarding, mentorship, benefits and wages, clinical ladders, engagement and empowerment, workplace environment, recognition, education, role transition, and state legislature (WV Nursing Workforce Summit, 2017). Four action teams were developed based on the results from the summit with one focusing on the recruitment and retention of bedside nurses in the state inspiring this study. This qualitative descriptive study explored the key factors of nurse retention for nurses with over five years of experience who have remained bedside nurses in the state of WV. The purpose of this article is to present a summary of the study's results to the RNs in the state.

Methods

Because of the rural nature of the state and the current COVID-19 pandemic, the study was conducted via email. The inclusion criteria for the study were (a) entry-level registered nurse licensed in the state of WV, (b) currently employed in a health care organization in WV, (c) and five years or more experience at the bedside on the same nursing unit with the state of WV. After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through Shepherd University was obtained, The Future of Nursing WV Coalition representative, Aila Accad, forwarded the call for participants to nurse managers within the state, who then forwarded the email to their respective nursing staff. After the participants read the informed consent and agreed to participate in the

study, the interview questions were emailed to the participant. Data was analyzed using In Vivo coding via Quirkos. Demographic data was analyzed separately.

Study Results

Demographics

Twenty-nine participants responded to the call for participants and 22 completed the interviews. All participants identified themselves as white, non-Hispanic females. Ages were varied with the majority within the 31-40 age group. Additionally, BSN-prepared, non-certified, medical-surgical nurses with five to 10 years of experience represented the majority of participants in this study. (See Table 1)

Table 1: Participant Characteristics

N=22

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Data</u>
Age	
22-30	2
31-40	11
41-50	2
51-60	3
61 or older	4
Identified Gender	
Female	22
Race/Ethnicity	
White, Non-Hispanic	22
Highest Nursing Degree	
Diploma	1
ADN	3
BSN	16
MSN	2

Highest Non-Nursing Degree

BS	6
MS	1
None	14
Not Identified	1

Certified

Yes	8
No	14

Years RN

5-10	10
11-20	5
21-30	3
31+	4

Years on Unit Currently Employed

5-10	16
11-20	3
21-30	2
31+	1

Unit Currently Employed

Administration	1
Intensive Care	5
Medical-Surgical	11
Obstetrics	3
Outpatient	1

Themes

The themes and subthemes discovered were compensation, leadership (positive factors, negative factors), staffing, retention (recognition, growth opportunities, ideas to improve retention), job satisfaction (patients, coworker, work-life balance) and new grad/RN.

Compensation

Factors nurse managers and/or administration need to focus on to improve retention involve the theme of compensation. WV RNs strongly feel they should be paid for their experience and expertise. The study participants indicated healthcare organizations spend a great deal of time, effort, and money recruiting nurses, but the same is not said for retention. WV RNs would like to see a balanced effort in recruitment and retention.

- *“We did bonuses for new nurses coming into our organization but nothing for the nurses that have stayed here for the long haul.” Participant 5*
- *“...want more incentive and reward for experienced nurses. I feel new grads get sign on bonuses and other incentives but there is little such reward for experienced nurses.” Participant 17*

Leadership

The theme of leadership has resonated throughout this study. Negativity, lack of understanding, lack of support, and inability to accept ideas for change from bedside RNs were the main responses. Discussions of leadership generated positive responses. As Participant 12 stated “...she goes out of her way to accommodate scheduling requests, time off, pto, other things relating to the schedule. she also stands up for us (OB department) during hospital wide issues like floating/pulling or staffing our unit.” Negative factors included lack of understanding the role of the bedside RN.

“There is always some new expectation and they take the staff away from the bedside more than administration realizes. Our senior administration is so far disconnected from the bedside they forget that we are people and not machines. If the focus of quality improvement was truly to benefit the patient there would be

more buy in. However, the emphasis on proper documentation and patient satisfaction has taken over the expectation of quality care.” *Participant 2*

Staffing

The nurses in this study discussed nurse-patient ratios are needed to ensure patient safety by using a patient care staffing model. “Making sure all shifts have enough staff to run without care being compromised. Then stress level not as high.” (Participant 14). Utilizing ancillary staff, such as turn teams, was also cited as important. “More help – more and more tasks along with heavy burden of documentation is placed on the RNs shoulders and they have less and less help to complete them. More ancillary staff to assist like nursing assistants or techs. Turn team. More PT/OT available to help with ambulation, getting OOB.” (Participant 10)

Job Satisfaction

Nurses in WV remain at the bedside because of job satisfaction. This theme yielded three subthemes: patient, coworker, and work-life balance. Longevity on a hospital unit encourages trust among RNs and staff and efficient team functioning. This was a positive factor in nurse retention. Work-life balance was a factor in remaining on a nursing unit.

Patients.

- “I enjoy the intensity and critical care portions and making a difference in someone’s life. Often times they make a difference in my life.” *Participant 11*
- “Our patients are not only sicker than they were years ago, they are more informed and demanding a higher level of care.” *Participant 17*
- “I enjoy the complexity of a medical surgical unit. There is always something to learn and also something to teach a newer nurse. *Participant 6*

Coworker.

- “My nurses inspire me to help keep compassion and expertise at the bedside.”

Participant 5

- “But also the coworkers I have, have become family.” *Participant 16*

Work-Life Balance.

- “I would only leave my nursing unit for another position if my leadership team changed, better benefits came along, or if my home/work life balance became unequal or those needs changed.” *Participant 5*

New Grad/RN

The experienced RNs are concerned about the future of nursing. Standardized preceptor and unit orientation were discussed. Many RNs expressed concern regarding the lack of skills of the new graduate RN; however, what skills were lacking were not defined or discussed. Pre-licensure nursing curriculum was discussed by a few participants.

- “I am very worried about the future of nursing. The younger/newer nurses are not prepared when they come out of school, they lack hands on training in skills. They are given short orientations and then expected to handle/manage a large patient assignment with little nursing skills. They become overwhelmed and leave for other nursing professions.” *Participant 3*
- “Most patients that come to [my hospital] do not just have one medical problem, they have a list of comorbidities. Nurses that are entering the field of nursing need to be prepared to care for all of the dynamics of patient care.” *Participant 6*

- “The schools need to find a way to better prepare students for the "real life" of nursing. Learning skills in a SIMS lab does not give them a real experience as to the hospital environment.” *Participant 4*
- “They come to special units unprepared and due to staffing shortages are expedited through orientation to satisfy numbers.” *Participant 20*

Retention

This theme generated the subthemes of recognition, growth opportunities, and ideas for retention. WV RNs would like to be recognized by the healthcare organization. “Nurses should receive credit, recognition, and respect for their contributions.” (Participant 2). Additionally, WV RNs leave their nursing unit for other opportunities if those opportunities are available. “I often feel that it is time for me to leave beside nursing but I feel there aren't as many opportunities for experienced nurses beyond management roles or changing specialties, so I guess I also stay because I'm comfortable.” (Participant 17) Suggestions for improvement included the development of a clinical ladder to provide advancement of bedside nurses. “...clinical ladder. as of now there are not a lot of advancement opportunities in the nursing field in general.” (Participant 12)

The Future of Nursing WV Coalition requested the interview guide include a question to generate ideas to improve bedside nurse retention throughout the state. Below are some suggestions in the participant’s own voices.

- “But on a broader spectrum our state needs to have jobs for the family that may play into the decision to stay in WV.” *Participant 18*
- “Parking is a big issue at my facility. I think "Senior" nurse parking would be popular.”
Participant 17

- “If there is a way to recognize nurses individually and facility based through newspaper, TV, radio etc. Promote the random acts of kindness we do, let patients nominated nurses that cared for them. Use nurses "from the floor" at PR gatherings instead of the people who don't really do the work.” *Participant 19*
- “Actual breaks – RNs rarely get an interrupted 30 min lunch let alone their 15 minute breaks. Hour breaks and break nurses like the state of CA? Set staffing ratios for all job classes – i.e. one nursing assistant can only care for max 10 patients. Set ratios for RNs.” *Participant 10*
- “I believe actually listening to their employees and giving more input of each schedule due to personal needs of the staff.” *Participant 16*

Discussion

This qualitative study generated data on the topic of retention of experienced RNs within the state of WV. The results are not generalizable to the WV RN population; however, the themes and subthemes discovered are not surprising. Despite only one participant acknowledging the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on retention, the pandemic may have influenced the participant's responses. Further research on each theme and associated subthemes may or may not confirm the themes discovered in this study. Healthcare organization leaders within the state may use the results of this study to generate retention strategies important to WV RNs.

Conclusion

The generated themes and subthemes can be used by nurse managers and administrators to improve retention in the state of WV. I would like to thank the Future of Nursing WV Coalition for the opportunity to perform this important state study. Additionally, my sincere

thanks to the study participant's for taking the time to participate in this study during the current pandemic. Your candor and honesty were greatly appreciated.

Principal Investigator: Mary Hancock, PhD, RNC-OB is an Associate Professor of Nursing at Shepherd University in Shepherdstown.

Future of Nursing WV Coalition: Aila Accad, MSN, RN is the Executive Director and the inspiration for this study.

References

WV Nursing Workforce Summit. (2017). Proceedings and outcomes. Retrieved from
<http://www.futureofnursingwv.org/nursing-workforce-summit>

