Our Health Care Crisis: The Arkansas Nursing Shortage

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The Nursing Shortage

The nursing shortage in Arkansas will:

✓ lengthen hospital stays of patients
✓ increase numbers of patient deaths
✓ jeopardize the economic base of the state
Nurses are:

✓ High tech professionals
✓ With an above average standard of living
✓ Contribute significantly to the state’s tax base
How many new RNs needed in Arkansas each year to meet shortage?

1, 925
How many *new* RNs currently being graduated each year?

683

Needed: 1,925
1,925 New RN Positions Per Year Equal to:

- Salary base of $59,675,000 added to the economy per year.
- $2,808,575 new tax revenues per year
- $149,187,500 economic benefit to the state’s communities (2.5 multiplier).
- Equal to 14 new Toyota or Nestle plants in the next 7 years located in all regions of the state.
Ark Legislative Commission on Nursing

Established by Act 1465 of 2001
Has met monthly to address the following goals:

✓ To study the status of the nursing workforce shortage, and the nurse educator shortage with their accompanying economic impact
✓ To project the need for nurses and nurse educators in the state
Commission Goals, cont

- To develop a strategic statewide plan to ensure an appropriate … workforce
- To convene stakeholders from nursing education, the health care industry, business, and legislature, and the public
- To ensure and promote recruitment, retention, advancement, recognition, reward, and renewal activities for nurses in Arkansas
Commission Members

- Legislators – Interim Committees on Public Health and Labor
- Members representing organizations and groups of:
  - nursing
  - health care (hospitals, nursing homes, home health, health department, etc)
  - medicine
  - business
Website of Commission

www.arkleg.state.ar.us/scripts/ablr/committees.nursing.asp
Federal & National Studies/Reports

Findings:

✓ Aging nursing workforce
✓ Fewer young people entering the profession
✓ Reduced graduation rates--nationwide
✓ Lack of racial and gender diversity in profession
National Findings/Conclusions cont.

- Old strategies to recruit and retain nurses will not work
- The nursing shortage is national and international in scope
- Must provide financial assistance to nursing students
- Societal support must be built
National Conclusions/Findings, cont.

✓ Must change/address the workforce environment in order to retain the current nursing workforce, including:
- Nurse and Physician relationships
- Adequate administrative support
- Adequate number of nurses
- Participation of nurses in governance
Projected National RN Need

- By 2010 U.S. needs an additional million RNs.
- Need 46% more
- 2,201,813 RNs currently
- 3,205,813 needed by 2010
Projected National LPN Need

- By 2010 U.S. needs an additional 322,000 LPNs
- Need 46% more
- 700,000 LPNs currently
- 3,222,000 needed by 2010
Nursing Shortage Studies by Other States

*No information on states in white
Arkansas Findings
- Economic Impact -

☑ Arkansas hospitals are vital to the economy of their communities and to the state.
  - Baxter County Regional Hospital contributed $79,137,817 to the county in 1998
  - Ouachita Medical Center contributed $32,186,243 to the county
  - Stone County Medical Center contributed $7,546,199 to the county
Worsening RN Shortage in Arkansas Hospitals

- 1,092 Budgeted unfilled RN positions in Arkansas hospital in 2002
- An 82% increase in vacancy rate since 1998
Yearly Increase Required to Meet RN Demand in Arkansas

Actual vs Need

2001: 683
2010: 1925
Yearly Increase Required to Meet LPN Demand in Arkansas
Arkansas’ Problem

✓ Arkansas’ current supply of nurses is not adequate.
✓ The workplace environment and patient-to-nurse ratios creates dissatisfaction and turnover of experienced nurses.
✓ Nurses are leaving Arkansas for higher pay out-of-state.
What must be done to retain nurses in Arkansas?

Arkansas hospitals and other employers of nurses must address the workplace environment, nurse-to-patient ratios, and salary.
Arkansas’ Problem

- Arkansas cannot recruit sufficient nurses from other states or foreign countries to meet its need.
- Arkansas must grow its own future nurses.
- More students must be attracted to the nursing profession.
Arkansas’ Problem

However, Arkansas does not have sufficient numbers of faculty to educate the number of students needed to address shortage.

The lack of nursing faculty creates a critical bottleneck in the new nurse pipeline!
Why the Lack of Nursing Faculty in Arkansas?

✓ The average age of doctoral faculty is 53.7 years

✓ 50% of doctoral faculty in the state are 54+ years
Why the Lack of Nursing Faculty in Arkansas?

- Over the past 3 years, RN programs had a 60% turnover of their educators.
- Over the past 3 years, LPN programs had a 94.5% turnover of their educators.

Nurse educators are leaving education.
How does a Nurse Educator Shortage Contribute to the Crisis?

✓ RN programs had 17 unfilled full-time faculty positions in last academic year.

The lack of faculty prevents programs from admitting more students.
Why Are There Insufficient Numbers of Nurse Educators?

- Of the 78 graduates from Arkansas masters nursing programs last year, only 4 assumed nurse educator positions (not already employed as nurse educators).

- Of the three doctoral graduates, all were already nurse educators.
Why Are There Insufficient Numbers of Nurse Educators?

✔ In 2002 some new RN graduates started at salaries higher than their graduate prepared faculty

✔ Nurse educators can make $10,000 to $20,000 more per year in the clinical arena than they can as faculty
Immediate Actions Required

1. Extend the life of the Commission for the development of a strategic plan to address current and future critical needs.

2. Implement strategies to retain the current nursing workforce.
Immediate Actions

3. Attract and support larger numbers of students entering the profession.

4. Ensure that Arkansas nursing programs have the resources, including faculty, to educate the number of students required to meet the nursing workforce needs.
Immediate Actions Recap

- Nursing Workforce Retention
- Recruitment of Nursing Students
- Support of Nursing Faculty/Schools
- Continuation of the Commission
Conclusion

The Nursing Shortage will greatly worsen unless immediate, comprehensive action is taken affecting both academia and the workplace.
Conclusion

The shortage will:

• cripple the health care system in our state
• endanger the lives of Arkansans, and
• jeopardize the economic viability of Arkansas.