Positive Practice Environments

International Centre on Nurse Migration

fact sheet 2010

Health systems throughout the world have been under significant pressure in recent years to balance increasing service demands with a lacking supply of health human resources. In response to increased demands and workforce shortages, many countries have resorted to the international recruitment of health care professionals, including nurses. Although trade agreements encourage free movement of professionals, variances in nursing regulations, education and practice environments challenge the integration of foreign-educated nurses into host countries. Based on a review of current trends and issues related to the international migration of nurses, key considerations focusing on seven issues and strategic approaches are discussed to develop positive practice environments that influence long-term integration and retention of foreign-educated nurses.

Key considerations

Globalization and international influences

➡ The impact of various national and international agreements on international nurses needs to be assessed

➡ Not only international nurses, but also employers should know the responsibilities and the compliance requirements under the agreements

➡ The highest possible standard, its compliance and effectiveness need to be developed, implemented and evaluated

Migration

➡ Positive practice environments need to be continually assessed and evaluated to ensure they achieve and maintain their objectives and targets

➡ Identifying motivation for migration will inform and highlight issues that need to be addressed to ensure long-term integration

Labor market and nursing shortages

➡ The underlying problems of recruitment and retention within the existing health sector workforce should be addressed

➡ Efforts to manage retention are necessary to assist long-term integration of international nurses

➡ Demographic changes and long-term trends need to be observed

➡ The nursing workforce needs to be developed to meet patient needs and service demands

Immigration and society

➡ It is important for international nurses to be incorporated into the workforce, including the health care environment and general society

➡ To build relationships and social structures, it is necessary to develop partnerships with consumer groups, professional organizations, special interest groups, communities and local services

➡ It is crucial to enforce a zero tolerance rule related to racism from colleagues, patients and society

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Characteristics of diversity

➡ Equality prevents and eliminates workplace discrimination and accommodates difference

➡ Legislation and policy are not sufficient to address racism and discrimination in order to bring about equality in the workplace

➡ It is essential to promote awareness of all employees with regard to their individual responsibility for ensuring the adherence to diversity legislation and policies

Patient care and cultural competency

➡ Human rights' legislation must be incorporated into organizational philosophy, policies, strategies and procedures

➡ To benefit health care delivery and long-term retention of international nurses, it is necessary to ensure their competencies and skills and identify a standardized process to address ongoing professional competency

➡ Adapting to a culturally diverse patient population requires specific education and training for all health professionals

Experiences of international nurses in employment

➡ Ethical employment policies should be in effect and administered fairly to all nurses

➡ International nurses need appropriate support in adjusting to variations in care systems, language competency, knowledge of medications and proficiency in technology

➡ The social costs of migration should be considered in policies

➡ It is vital to have a better understanding of

❚ the international nurses' motivations for migration and

❚ how to retain valuable human resources

Strategic approaches

➡ Develop a modern, robust human resource management system and progressive employment policies

➡ Develop a strategy to integrate international nurses

❚ Build a cultural diversity dimension into key health care policy strategies

❚ Develop policies that are specific to the needs of minority ethnic groups

❚ Develop good practice and policy guidelines within health care organizations

❚ Develop intercultural workplaces and best practices

Conclusion

Foreign-educated nurses are sustaining an increased presence in many health systems of developed countries today and will be the most likely trend for the future. The contributions to patient care made by foreign-educated nurses are of great significance and incomparable value. It is important to ensure that these professionals are properly integrated into the workplace in order to make the greatest possible impact in patient care. Proper integration also improves satisfaction, which in turn increases the retention of these valuable human resources.