

National Nursing Week

Possible nursing shortage looms

A high proportion of currently employed nurses are going to retire in the next 10 years, but whether or not there will be enough replacements for them remains to be seen, says Lynda Monik, president of the Essex Chapter of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and director of In-Patient Services at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital.

"Currently, about 25 per cent of those employed as nurses who live in Essex County actually work outside of this area – primarily in Michigan."

The inability to find full-time work has been a strong motivator to send resumé's beyond Essex County, she says.

According to statistics released by the College of Nurses of Ontario, only about 65 per cent of registered nurses in Essex County are employed full-time. Monik says that number needs to change.

"Canadian nurses are choosing to work in the United States," she says. "Years ago, there were no Canadian jobs for them and that started the trend of searching for work in the U.S. We cannot afford to let that happen again. Once they leave, there's very little chance they will come back."

The fact is, says Monik, many don't want to leave the area. "But they need to work full-time jobs. They don't want to work three part-time ones to earn their income."

It may be an even more difficult pill for nurses to swallow given statistics that show them to be the professional most admired by Canadians after firefighters. A 2005 Leger survey indicated that 94 per cent of Canadians polled said they trust nurses. Doctors ranked fourth



As the large population of Baby Boomers age the demand for geriatric nursing will increase.

at 89 per cent. Both have ranked in the top 10 for the past four years.

A few factors may begin to sway things in favour of convincing Canadian nurses to forego a U.S. career. First, the soaring value of the Canadian dollar, which recently broke 90 cents U.S. for the first time since 1977, means that the income earned in the U.S. is falling.

Second, the Ontario government has made a commitment to hire 8,000 full-time nurses before the next provincial election – a move which would go far in solving not only the issue of keeping nurses in Canada, but of providing proper health care services to the public.

"So far, they've hired between 3,000 and 4,000 full-time nurses," says Monik. "What we're looking for is a ratio of 70 per cent of our nurses employed full-time. We're not there yet but progress is being made."

"Having full-time nurses is something that benefits the public," she continues. "It means a greater continuity of care. If you're in the hospital, it's likely that you'll have a different nurse each day. You're entrusting your care to someone you don't know when you're there – we want to ensure that you have the most positive experience possible. If a nurse has a chance to get to know you and your needs in terms of pain management, nausea, etc., there's a far better chance that your stay will be safer and better."

Nurses ultimately are in the people business, says Monik.

"Our critical thinking will help you. We are the doctor's eyes and ears when they're not in the hospital. Therefore, if we don't have skilled nurses replacing us as we begin to retire, who will do this?"

The numbers of graduates are

not enough to fill the places that will open up, she says. "It's a hard job – it can be very physical and some people decide that early retirement is their preference."

According to a Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) study, there will be a shortfall of 78,000 nurses by 2011 and 113,000 by 2016.

To attract people to the profession, the ability to offer full-time employment is essential, says Monik. "This area is even more susceptible to a shortage because we're located on the U.S. border."

And patients today tend to be sicker, with more acute and complex problems than before, making the job more difficult.

"People are living longer now – they come to the hospital with more than one ailment which makes their treatment more complex. It's a challenge for nurses," says Monik.

"We don't have the resources to do everything we'd like to. But nurses and doctors remain very committed to patient care – working long hours, some even overtime unpaid. Without that commitment, the system would collapse."

FACTS AND FIGURES*

- Nurses are the largest group of health care professionals in Canada. In 2002, there were 254,752 registered nurses (RNs) in Canada
- the average age of a RN is 44.2
- just over five per cent of nurses are male
- most practicing RNs are employed in hospitals (59.7 per cent). Other major places of employment include nursing homes, community health centres, home care agencies, educational institutions and physicians' offices/clinics
- according to a Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) study, there will be a shortfall of 78,000 nurses by 2011 and 113,000 by 2016
- the ratio of practising RNs to the Canadian population in 2002 was one nurse to every 136 people
- in 2002, 86 per cent of nurses worked in direct patient care, five per cent in administration, four per cent in education and one per cent in research.

*Source: Canadian Nurses Association

Nursing Opportunities

Nursing is full of opportunities to grow, to advance and to change your career direction. Whatever your interest -- working with children, scientific procedures and high-tech equipment, teaching and promoting healthy practices, developing your management skills -- nursing has something for you. Here are just a few examples:

IN THE COMMUNITY:

- health clinics
- schools
- wellness programs in the workplace
- doctors' offices
- home care
- family planning clinics
- poison control centres
- prenatal and well-baby clinics
- rehabilitation centres
- sexually transmitted disease units
- AIDS hospices

IN A HOSPITAL:

- emergency
- intensive care
- operating room
- post-surgery
- maternity
- cardiovascular (heart)
- oncology (cancer)
- psychiatry
- pediatrics (children)
- palliative (dying people)
- geriatrics (seniors)



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Celebrate nurses during Nurses' Week May 8th to 14th

Local 008 and 11 nurses work throughout Windsor and Essex County at:

- Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital
- Leamington District Memorial Hospital
- Windsor-Essex County Health Unit
- Daimler Chrysler Corporation International
- Community Care Access Centre
- Banwell Gardens
- Brouillette Manor
- Chateau Park Lodge
- Heron Terrace
- Huron Lodge
- Sun Parlor Home
- Windsor Regional Hospital and Cancer Clinic
- Versa Care-Windsor Place

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