

Sample Essay on Nursing Shortage

The nursing shortage in the United States has been a growing problem since the early 1990s and shows no signs of abating. The American Nurse Credentialing Center (ANCC) reported that in 2012, 75% of nurses were over the age of 46, while only 6% are under the age of 25. Nursing schools have had to lower their admissions standards just to fill their classes. On top of this, 45% of nurses are planning on retiring within the next five years.

This is bad news for any potential patients looking to get treatment. One survey revealed that 90% of people would recommend hospitals where nurses communicate well with physicians and other healthcare personnel, while another study showed that 96% believe it is "very important" for nursing staff to work as a team. In both studies, over half of the respondents also stated that their hospital had difficulty attracting and retaining nurses. A labor market analysis from 2009 found that there were 30,000 fewer nurses than needed to meet demand at the time.

The largest segment of current nurse workforces are those aged 40-61 years old, which means the crisis is only going to get worse in coming years. The aging workforce was exacerbated by 9/11, when many nurses who volunteered to help with the influx of patients were exposed to "extremely hazardous conditions" for weeks on end without proper safety equipment or adequate rest periods. This led to increased cancer rates among this group, making it even harder for hospitals around the country to hire nurses.

The main cause of the shortage is that current nursing students aren't completing their degree to become registered nurses (RNs). One study found that among people who started college in 2006, only 66% were still in school by 2012. While it's not entirely clear why this

trend exists, one theory is that young people are making more money in the booming technology industry, and thus put off higher education for a few years. Another possible reason is because health care reform has led to hospitals hiring more Registered Nurse Practitioners (RNPs) in lower level positions like nurse practitioners and physician assistants. These professionals do many of the same tasks as RNs but don't require a bachelor's degree to obtain licensure.

These positions are often the highest paying in nursing, so many current nurses are moving up to them, which means there are fewer RN positions open. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) reported that 40% of newly licensed RNs have either a masters or doctoral degree, up from just 26% in 2000. Due to this increase in advanced education, many nurses feel they deserve higher wages for their new skillsets. On average, however, advanced practice nurse earn about \$11,000 less than staff RNs and \$16,000 less than nurse managers.

In conclusion, the nursing shortage in the United States is caused by a variety of factors, but two main ones are nurse candidates not completing their degrees and advanced practice nurses being paid less than registered nurses. The aging workforce further exacerbates this problem because there simply aren't enough young people to take on so many jobs.