

Retention and Recruitment Research

RPNAO identified ongoing challenges related to the limited amount of the Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) research and the interpretation of available nursing research that supports sustainable decision making process specific to RPN. This limited knowledge continues to result in the role (utilization) of the RPN to remain largely misunderstood by peers, health care administrators and the public.

Assessment

Registered Practical Nursing Association of Ontario (RPNAO) identified that a better understanding of RPNs in Ontario was required to develop an effective strategic plan that focused on retention and recruitment of (RPNs).

The initial step in this process was to assess what information was available about RPNs in Ontario. The assessment process identified that there was information available through CIHI and the College of Nurses related to the number of RPNs practicing but limited information on the factors that enhanced/deter recruitment or those aspects that supported/threaten retention. Research data that is abundantly available, both nationally and internationally, demonstrated that significant investigation into the various career stages of the Registered Nurse has identified important retention and recruitment strategies resulting in governmental and organizational initiatives to support nurses. However, the assessment revealed that little information was specifically available about the retention and recruitment factors that impact the Registered Practical Nurse and this results in limited data available to support evidence informed strategies.

Plan

As the professional voice of RPNS in Ontario and with RPNs representing a significant proportion of Ontario's healthcare's workforce, it was essential that RPNAO develop a strategic plan that not only supported its 5,000 current members but the professional needs of all RPNs in Ontario

RPNAO has committed to undertake the first major study specifically focusing on RPNs in Ontario. A partnership with Juice Inc was established to support the RPNAO 2010 study process.

Implementation

The study was comprised of a survey followed by focus groups to gain a stronger understanding of issues and to provide clarity of the key survey findings. Ethical principles, appropriate rigor and an independent analysis by Juice Inc. was conducted to prevent bias in our efforts to ensure we have quality data. The survey was offered to all RPNs in Ontario and to a sample of key stakeholders in Ontario (Nursing Leaders from various healthcare sectors and student members).

Evaluation

The study identified that the top three reasons for RPNs leaving the RPN role were: *lack of respect for what RPNs do, role ambiguity, and inadequate compensation*. Despite these factors impacting the retention of RPNs, 93% of RPNs said that they “*love the profession*”. Addressing lack of respect for what RPNs do and role ambiguity are key to retaining RPNs and delivering high-quality care. RPNAO has researched and developed tools to support nurses as well as other health care leaders that attend to these issues including the Workplace Violence Prevention toolkit (<https://www.rpnao.org/practice-education/e-learning/workplace-violence>) and our role clarity project (https://www.rpnao.org/sites/default/files/file/RPNAO_6006_RoleClarityBrochure_Final-online.pdf).

The study is available upon request.