

# Macrotrends in Nursing: The Nursing Shortage and Growth Opportunities for Higher-qualified Nurses

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Hello this is Dr. Anne Dabrow Woods, Chief Nurse of Wolters Kluwer, Health, Learning, Research and Practice, and this is “From the Desk of the Chief Nurse”. Today we're going to be talking about some of the macro trends in nursing, how the nursing shortage is increasing, and what are the opportunities for highly qualified nurses. Joining me today is Lisa Bonsall, our senior clinical editor of Lippincott's Nursing Center. Thanks for joining me here today Lisa. Thanks for having me Anne. We're gonna be talking about the nursing shortage today. But when you look at the numbers of nurses here in the US, we're at about 4 million practicing nurses in the US and there's 29 million nurses globally. So overall that looks really good but we know that is not the whole story and there is a nursing shortage again, and right now we are short 7.2 million nurses according to the World Health Organization, and by 2035 we are going to be actually short twelve point nine million nurses. Think about that - that's a huge, huge number. By 2024 we're going to need over a million nurses just to take care of the people here in the United States. So we have a lot of work in front of us to help deal with this whole nursing shortage. So when we look at the nursing shortage one of the things that's really contributed to it is our population is growing and we simply don't have enough nurses to care for all the people that are out there and you add on to that fact that people are living a lot longer and people today who are

alive in their 90s to 100 years old, they would not have lived that long years ago. So that's really contributed to it. But one of the biggest things that's contributed to the nursing shortage is nurse burnout. So talk to me a little bit about that. Well nursing is hard work, it's physically demanding it's emotionally taxing, it's really tough on us. So you know when you think about it, the work that we do and then we're caring for these patients who are living so long, they have multiple comorbidities, we're having to deal with family dynamics, it's really hard work. In fact overall, nurses are twice as likely to be depressed as the general population, even more likely female nurses four times more likely to commit suicide. So like we really have to look at what we can do to take care of our nurses because it's really hard work. Yes I absolutely agree with you and certainly nurse turnover is such a costly business. You know the average nurse today stays in her position for five point six years. That's not very long when you look at how long you actually are in the field of nursing and the average turnover rate is sixteen point eight percent. And it costs a hospital to replace a general medical surgical nurse forty-eight thousand dollars a year. And if you're a specialty nurse, like the emergency room or critical care, it can cost up to eighty five thousand dollars a year. That is enough to really put hospitals in a difficult place financially. Absolutely, it behooves the institution to take care of those nurses. Now what's really interesting is when we look at the US workforce, there seems to be pretty much a balance between Millennials and Gen Xers in the market. And then the baby boomers are starting to decline. When you look at the general workforce they are only about 25% of the general workforce, but in nursing it's different. So talk to me a little bit about that. So in nursing, 55% of our workforce are over 50 years old and about 33% of them are going to be retiring in the next five to ten, ten to fifteen years. So we're really losing that knowledge, I mean they've been in practice a long time. They've learned a lot through the years and you know we need to be learning from these nurses

and when we lose that expert knowledge it's really going to affect our patient care. That's right because when the people who are over the age of 50 start to retire, you've got Millennials and Gen Xers coming up but yet we don't have enough of them who have that knowledge base to really take the place of the people who are retiring. You're absolutely right, that's quite scary and we need to do something about that, and really move that knowledge down to the younger generation so they can take more of a leadership role, not only clinically at the bedside but also in leadership positions like management as well as in academia. Now talk to me a little bit about some of the issues we're seeing with you know faculty and clinical sites that are really contributing to the nursing shortage. Well overall there's a shortage of faculty and clinical sites so you know even those people who are applying to become nurses and are applying to the nursing schools, they're getting turned away because there's simply not enough people to teach them. And also there's a salary there - yeah exactly so you know to pursue a career in academia like we're used to you know wanting to teach but we also have to live our lives and be able to support our families so there's definitely that inequity there in salary. Right I absolutely agree with you I mean you look at the average salary of an assistant professor versus that of someone who's an advanced practice nurse you can earn a lot more money say as a nurse practitioner or nurse anesthetist then you certainly can as faculty so that's going to create more of an inequity where people who should be teaching don't want to go teach because they're simply not making enough money. So that can create a huge issue for us. And the fact that you mentioned the lack of clinical sites. Now I know what we're seeing in universities is a lot more simulation happening so they give them a place where students can actually learn the skills of Nursing. One of the other big factors affecting you know the nursing shortage is staffing. Now you and I both worked as staff for quite a long time before we became advanced practice nurses. I think we can both

agree that when you look at staffing today, because it's usually done by numbers and not as much about the acuity of your patients, a lot of times when you're at the bedside it feels like you don't have enough staff. Talk to me a little bit about that. Right it's very rare that you would come across a nurse who's gonna say oh yeah my shift was great we had plenty of staff. I was able to do all those comfort measures for my patients. It's very rare these days. Like you said, staffing is done by the numbers so you know it's somebody maybe who's not right there at the bed-side who's making those decisions. That's why it's so important for nurses to have that voice when it comes to you know being at the table and making decisions because staffing is a real issue and if you don't have enough staff you're not providing appropriate patient care. It can be unsafe. So one of the things we need to look at as far as our staffing models are concerned is they have to learn to take into account acuity of patients just because of all the things that you mentioned. But also we need to make sure they take into account the traffic in and out of units. I mean you may look at staffing numbers on a unit of what they say is 20 patients but you may have 10 admissions and 10 discharges in the same day and that's really going to have an impact on the amount of work that the nurse has to do and that certainly does contribute to burnout. So one of the other things that seems to be such an issue with nurse burnout and our lack of nurses is that now there seems to be a difficulty with our career life and work balance. So talk to me a little bit about that. Oh it's such a big topic. I mean as nurses we care for other people, that's what we that's what we do. And usually we're the last person on our own to-do list. And it's, it's time that that has to change because if we're not healthy and well-rested then we can't provide the best care. So you know research shows that nurses are more overweight, we get less sleep, we have more stress, and we can't provide optimal care if we're not in tip-top shape ourselves. Absolutely and one of the things that you developed was a care plan for the nurse themselves. So talk to me

a little bit about that. So in my nursing care plan we really focus on three aspects of a nurses life. So we look at license and certification and all those “have-to-do’s”, then we look at lifelong learning which we know are the like that we “should do” and then we also look at work-life balance which is another “have-to-do”. It's really important that we focus care on ourselves so that we can take better care of others. Absolutely, I think it's really important I thought that was very innovative of you to come up with the care plan for nurses themselves because your absolutely right, it's important we have to take care of ourselves first so that we can care for others. So one of the other contributors to the nursing shortage is that nurses simply don't feel safe where they work and we've seen this upsurge in violence. So talk to me a little bit about that, what are the latest stats related to the violence in healthcare. Sure, so between 2005 and 2014 there has been a hundred and ten percent increase in violent incidents against healthcare workers. That's incredible, that's unacceptable that nurses and other healthcare staff are not feeling safe at work. Up to 38 percent of healthcare workers have been the victim of violence and 67 percent are women. So you know you have to feel, we spend so much time at work like that's you know we spend more time at work than we do at home sometimes. And to not feel safe where you are is, it's scary, it's sad, it's unacceptable. I absolutely agree with you so hospitals need to see this as a priority and make sure that their workforce feels safe and only then are nurses really going to feel comfortable then where they actually work. Well we do know that one of the other trends that we're seeing that's really quite exciting is there's great opportunities for higher qualified nurses in healthcare today. So what we do know is that healthcare is really shifting so where we see care being given predominantly in the acute care setting today what we're seeing is a shift to have it be cared for in home care and in primary care. And in those areas are places where advance practice nurses can really have an impact. So can you talk to me a little bit about that.

So it's really a great opportunity you know. We can really reach patients where they are and as advanced practice nurses we have that knowledge, we have the skills, to go to patients homes and make those diagnoses and provide the care that they need. We can work collaboratively with all the members of the healthcare team. It's really an opportunity for growth for our profession. You know, we need our bedside nurses, we need that frontline staff. There's just so many opportunities within our profession and as we're getting these advanced degrees we need to be using them and getting out into the community and providing the care where patients are needing it. Right and I think healthcare has changed so dynamically over the last few years, you know having your associate degree is no longer enough to really meet the needs of the changing healthcare paradigm. So we see more and more nurses going on for their bachelor's degree and then going on for their masters and their doctoral degrees. We've certainly seen how advanced practice nurses have grown in their numbers over the last few years and actually the biggest growth rate is thirty one percent is where we are now. That's a huge increase. And then when you look at doctorally prepared nurses, you know twenty years ago we didn't have the Doctor of Nursing Practice and now we do and that's one of the fastest growth areas in nursing today but we need to make sure we keep that in balance with our PhD programs because even though we have the DNPs who are all about implementing the latest research into practice we still need the PhDs who are all about building the curriculum as well as doing the original research. Give me your thoughts on that. Sure, I completely agree because to really elevate our profession, you know we need that nursing piece in the research. Absolutely and I think certainly moving on to more highly qualified nursing really helps us you know as a nursing workforce really helps to position us well to meet the needs of population health which is really what it's all about. So I wanted to ask you one last question here, if you had the opportunity to talk to someone who was

interested in nursing what would you tell them about our profession? I am always Pro Nursing. I think there are so many opportunities in our profession. When I think about my own career path and how I got to where I am, it's just amazing. You know when I did go to nursing school it was because you know I wanted that that care, like I wanted to provide care to people and I still do and I still love the volunteer work that I do. But I just think there's so many opportunities – research, advanced practice, there's so many opportunities in nursing, I wouldn't change this career for myself. Well that's good to know, that's good to know. I feel the same way. You know being a nurse, I became a nurse because I wanted to help people and when I first became a nurse I had no idea the impact that myself or the profession would have on others and I think that in nursing we have that real opportunity to make a difference in people's lives and that's what we're all about is caring for people. So thank you so much for being with me here today. Today we talked a little bit about the nursing shortage and how it's going to increase, in some of the ways we need to look at fixing that but also the growth rate for highly qualified nurses and how important they are to handling things like our whole issue around population health. So this is Dr. Anne Woods and this is “From the Desk of the Chief Nurse”.

Thank you.

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