

EDITORIAL FOR NURSE EDUCATION IN PRACTICE

Title: The potential benefits of legacy mentoring for newly qualified nurses

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The growing shortage of nursing staff is of increasing concern for healthcare organizations. The nursing workforce is depleted by issues such as high turnover, stress, and burnout (Wissemann et al., 2022). Health care organizations are currently committed to address the difficulties associated with the retention of newly qualified nurses, which is an increasingly pressing issue. In their study, Konver et al., (2014) report that nearly 20% of newly qualified nurses leave the profession in their first year of practice (Konvner et al., 2014). In the USA, 25% of newly qualified nurses continue to resign from their first job during their first year of practice (NCSBN, 2020). This gives an idea of how much the first months of practice and the transition to becoming an autonomous practitioner is a very sensitive time. Those new to the profession often experience a number of mental, physical and professional challenges during the transition period (Brook et al., 2019), impacting on job satisfaction and retention (Wildermuth et al., 2020; Kim & Shin, 2020). Overall, preceptorship, mentorship, orientation programs and participation in CPD activities during the transition period, have shown to increase job satisfaction and rates of retention in newly qualified nurses, and have a great impact on how they experience the beginning of their careers (Edwards et al., 2015; Gardiner & Sheen, 2016; Pasila et al., 2017). While inadequate supervision, lack of support, and unaddressed learning deficits can lead not only to dissatisfaction and intention to leave, but potentially also to negative outcomes for patients (Gardiner & Sheen, 2016).

Organisational retention initiatives are also focused on the ageing nursing workforce, as almost a third of current nurses are in their late career (NHS, 2019). Up to 4.7 million nurses worldwide are expected to retire by 2030 (ICN, 2020). This numbers could further rise, considering that during the Covid-19 pandemic there have been many delayed retirements, or nurses temporarily returning to practice (ICN, 2020). In this context, the potential for a stable return to service of retired nurses is becoming less and less negligible. Organizations, in fact, are in danger of losing a large amount of knowledge, skills, and expertise of nurses. The cost of the loss of knowledge may be difficult to quantify, but knowledge management strategies have been developed to help organisations identify what kinds of knowledge they possess, and what mechanisms they can create to retain and share it. For example, much of the key knowledge in the nursing profession is based on experience and tacit understanding, of which nurses up to retirement or already retired are the main holders (Voit & Carson, 2012). Organisation should focus on how to retain nurses up to retirement, and attract post-retirement nurses, considering facilitators such as lighter and flexible work conditions, improved education and training, supportive environment, and financial incentives (Kaewpan & Peltzer, 2019; Voit & Carson, 2012).

Organisations will need to adopt a strategic approach to the support and retain those new to the profession and those approaching retirement. These strategies may include how to ensure that the wealth of knowledge, skills, and expertise of nurses up to retirement or already retired is not lost to

the organisation. One potential solution example to make this possible is Legacy Mentoring. Legacy mentors are experienced nurses aged 55 or older with a wealth of knowledge and passion to share with other nurses, who provide coaching, mentoring and support to nurses who are at the start of their careers (Clauson et al., 2011). Legacy mentors offer potential to support different workforce retention initiatives (e.g., preceptorship, return to practice, internationally educated nurses' registration in host country). They could also fill roles in terms of supporting newly qualified nurses in practice (e.g., practice assessor/practice supervisor) (Clauson et al., 2011; Haines et al., 2021). In addition, the legacy mentorship could be an opportunity for nurses up to retirement or already retired to find a new perspective for their career (Haines et al., 2021).

Programs implementing the role of legacy mentors have found several positive aspects. They contributed to an attractive workplace by addressing newly qualified nurses' and up to retirement or already retired nurses' needs (Jangland et al., 2021). From the point of view of the newly qualified nurses, they were less likely to leave in the first year of transition, and also felt supported and satisfied (Jangland et al., 2021; Baldwin et al., 2016). As for the nurses up to retirement or already retired, they enjoyed the new work opportunity, feeling rewarded by the experience, perceiving that mentees were visibly helped by their support and influence (Jangland et al., 2021; McDonald et al., 2010). They also felt that the experience of mentoring newly qualified nurses during transition enabled them to re-connect with nursing-related activities and brought new challenges in retirement (McDonald et al., 2010). Both the newly qualified nurses and the nurses up to retirement or already retired saw value in their mentor-mentee relationship. One study also found that the patients were satisfied with the nursing care received by the newly qualified nurses involved in the program, and that no critical incidences or failure to rescue events involving newly qualified nurses mentored by a retired nurse had occurred (McDonald et al., 2010).

Conclusions

To improve the retention of the nursing workforce, organisations should focus both on nurses who are close to retirement or those recently retired, and newly qualified nurses. The adoption of new roles and flexible ways of working could enhance the retention of nurses close to retirement or already retired. In addition, new enrolment strategies that consider retired nurses' needs, such as work-life balance, may enable them to share their professional knowledge and skills within clinical teams (Haines et al., 2021). Newly qualified nurses can greatly benefit from the retention of nurses close to retirement or already retired, by accessing their experience through guidance and supportive workplaces that facilitate autonomy, belonging, and value the contribution of nurses ensure that they are able to provide high-quality, safe care (West et al., 2020). Organisation needs to invest in ways

support newly qualified nurses, and legacy mentoring programmes offer an opportunity to do this, simultaneously addressing the retention of both groups.

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Declaration of interests

The Editor-in-Chief of *NET* holds a visiting position at the University of Genoa.

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