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Nursing Shortage Fact Sheet

Across the U.S. and in Virginia, we are experiencing a nursing shortage that is expected to worsen. The overall population is aging, increasing the consumption of healthcare services and the need for highly skilled registered nurses (RNs), and much of the nursing workforce is nearing retirement. The shortage of Spanish-speaking RNs is especially troubling because of the combination of Hispanic population growth plus disparities among Hispanic patients in access to care and quality of care. The Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing is concerned about the implications of the nursing shortage for all Virginians and has developed this Fact Sheet to keep stakeholders informed.

The shortage of nurses – now and in the future

Nationally

- Demand for full-time registered nurses (RNs) is expected to increase 41% from 2000 to 2020. By 2020, the U.S. will need more than a million more RNs. (Health Resources and Services Administration, September 2004) <ftp://ftp.hrsa.gov/bhpr/workforce/behindshortage.pdf>.
- According to the American Hospital Association:
 - U.S. hospitals had 116,000 RN vacancies as of December 2006.
 - 44% of hospital CEOs had more difficulty recruiting RNs in 2006 than in 2005.
<http://www.aha.org/aha/content/2007/PowerPoint/StateofHospitalsChartPack2007.ppt>
- According to a 2005 American College of Health Executives survey, 85% of hospital CEOs reported having a shortage of RNs. <http://www.ache.org/PUBS/research/ceoissues.cfm>

In Virginia

- The demand for registered nurses (RNs) in Virginia is projected to increase by 43% from 2000 to 2020. (Health Resources and Services Administration, September 2004) <ftp://ftp.hrsa.gov/bhpr/workforce/behindshortage.pdf>.
- By 2020, without increases in enrollments in nursing education programs, one in three patients in Virginia will not have a nurse to care for them. (*Condition of Nursing and Nursing Education in the Commonwealth*, State Council for Higher Education for Virginia, January 2004) <http://www.schev.edu/Reportstats/ConditionOfNursingReport-Jan2004.pdf?from=reportstats>

Reasons for the nursing shortage

Increasing number of elderly patients

- Between 2010 and 2030, the number of Americans age 65 or older is projected to increase by 30 million. The number of Americans age 85 or older – those most in need of healthcare – is projected to increase by 4 million. Meanwhile, the ratio of potential caregivers to the elderly is projected to decrease by 40%. (*Who Will Care for Each of Us?: America's Coming Health Care Crisis*, Nursing Institute at the University of Illinois College of Nursing, May 2001)
<http://www.uic.edu/nursing/nursinginstitute/policy/finalreports/finalreport.pdf>
- In Virginia, the elderly are the fastest-growing age group. From 2000 to 2010, the population 65 and older is projected to increase by 30%. Elderly Virginians consume more healthcare resources per person: in 2004, the elderly were 11% of Virginia's overall population, but consumed approximately 35% of Virginia's hospital resources. (*Condition of Nursing and Nursing Education in the Commonwealth*, State Council for Higher Education for Virginia, January 2004)
<http://www.schev.edu/Reportstats/ConditionOfNursingReport-Jan2004.pdf?from=reportstats>

Aging registered nurse (RN) workforce

- In 2004 the average age of the working RN was 46.8. 41% of RNs were 50 or older, and only 8% of RNs were under 30. (*2004 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses*, March 2004)
<ftp://ftp.hrsa.gov/bhpr/workforce/0306rnss.pdf>
- In Virginia, the average RN in 2004 was over 45 years old. (*Condition of Nursing and Nursing Education in the Commonwealth*, State Council for Higher Education for Virginia, January 2004)
<http://www.schev.edu/Reportstats/ConditionOfNursingReport-Jan2004.pdf?from=reportstats>

Shortage of nursing school students

- To meet the expected demand for RNs from 2000 to 2020, U.S. nursing schools would have to graduate approximately 90% more nurses than projected. (Health Resources and Services Administration, September 2004) <ftp://ftp.hrsa.gov/bhpr/workforce/behindshortage.pdf>
- Virginia's RN programs have more qualified applicants than can be accepted. (*Condition of Nursing and Nursing Education in the Commonwealth*, State Council for Higher Education for Virginia, January 2004) <http://www.schev.edu/Reportstats/ConditionOfNursingReport-Jan2004.pdf?from=reportstats>

Shortage of nursing school faculty

- U.S. nursing schools turned away 41,683 qualified applicants in 2005. Almost three-quarters (73.5%) of nursing schools surveyed cited faculty shortages as a reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into entry-level nursing programs. (*2005-2006 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*, American Association of Colleges of Nursing)
<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Media/NewsReleases/2005/enr105.htm>
- In Virginia, the average nursing school faculty member in 2002 was 53 years old. (*Condition of Nursing and Nursing Education in the Commonwealth*, State Council for Higher Education for Virginia, January 2004)
<http://www.schev.edu/Reportstats/ConditionOfNursingReportJan2004.pdf?from=reportstats>

Consequences of the nursing shortage

Lower quality of care

- According to a University of Pennsylvania study published in the October 2002 *Journal of the American Medical Association*:
 - Patients who have common surgeries in hospitals with the worst nursing staff levels had an up to 31% increased chance of dying.
 - Every additional patient in an average hospital nurse's workload increased the risk of death in surgical patients by 7%.
 - Researcher Dr. Linda Aiken concluded that "failure to retain nurses contributes to avoidable patient deaths."
http://www.nursing.upenn.edu/news/pdf/PennNursing_JAMA_10-22-02.pdf
- According to an article in the September/October 2005 issue of *Nursing Economics*:
 - 79% of RNs and 68% of Chief Nursing Officers believed the nursing shortage is affecting the overall quality of care in hospitals and other settings.
 - 93% of hospital RNs reported major problems with having enough time for patients.
http://www.medscape.com/viewpublication/785_index
- According to nursing research studies issued in March 2004 by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, hospitals with low nurse staffing levels tend to have higher rates of poor patient outcomes such as pneumonia, shock, cardiac arrest, and urinary tract infections.
<http://www.ahrq.gov/research/nursestaffing/nursestaff.htm>

Shortage of baccalaureate-prepared RNs

- A study published in the September 24, 2003 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* identified a clear link between the shortage of baccalaureate-prepared nurses and patient outcomes:
 - Surgical patients had a "substantial survival advantage" if treated in hospitals with higher proportions of nurses educated at the baccalaureate level or higher.
 - In hospitals, a 10% increase in the proportion of nurses holding BSN degrees decreased the risk of patient death and failure to rescue by 5%.
<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/290/12/1617>

Of particular concern: caring for Hispanic patients

Hispanic population growth

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics are the largest and fastest-growing racial/ethnic minority in the U.S.:
 - As of July 1, 2006, 44.3 million Americans (14.8% of the total population) were Hispanic.
 - Approximately one of every two people added to the U.S. population from July 1, 2005 to July 1, 2006 was Hispanic.
(U.S. Census Bureau News, May 2007)
<http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/010048.html>
- In Virginia, during the 5-year period from July 1, 2001 to July 1, 2006 the Hispanic population increased 74.2% - nearly 8 times faster than the overall population growth rate. (U. S. Census Bureau) <http://www.census.gov/popest/states/asrh/tables/SC-EST2006-03-51.xls>

Disproportionately few Hispanic RNs and nursing students

- Hispanics are the most under-represented group of nurses in the nation – in 2004, only 1.7% of RNs in the U.S. were Hispanic. (*2004 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses*, U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration) <ftp://ftp.hrsa.gov/bhpr/workforce/0306rnss.pdf>
- In 2001-2002, only 4.9% of RN students in the U.S. were Hispanic. (*Health, United States, 2005*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics) [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/05.pdf#summary](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/05.pdf#summary)
- In 2000, only 0.7% of RNs in Virginia were Hispanic. (*Virginia Board of Nursing Workforce Data Survey, 2001*) http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/nursing/survey/Appendix_D.pdf
- According to a 2001 profile of nursing education in 16 states and the District of Columbia:
 - Only 5% of nursing school students, 2% of faculty, and 1% of administrators were Latino.
 - The report concludes that “recruiting more Latino students into nursing programs should be a top priority.” (Southern Regional Education Board) http://www.sreb.org/programs/nursing/publications/02N03-Nursing_Faculty.pdf

The result: disparities in access to care and quality of care

- A 2005 study of six U.S. hospitals concluded that “language barriers appear to increase the risks to patient safety.” The study found that limited English-speaking patients were more likely to experience adverse events resulting in harm, and a greater severity of harm, than English-speaking patients. (“Language proficiency and adverse events in US hospitals: a pilot study,” *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, February 2007) <http://intqhc.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/19/2/60>
- According to the *2006 National Healthcare Disparities Report*:
 - Hispanics received the lowest quality of care of all racial/ethnic groups in core measures.
 - Hispanics were the least likely to have a regular health provider or regular dental visits.
 - Hispanic children were significantly less likely than non-Hispanic whites to receive all recommended vaccines.(Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, December 2006) <http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/nhdr06/nhdr06report.pdf>
- According to the *2006 National Health Interview Survey*, Hispanics were twice as likely as blacks and three times as likely as whites to be uninsured. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, June 2007) http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/earlyrelease/200706_01.pdf
- Each year from 1996 to 2006, Hispanic children were the most likely to be uninsured. In 2006, 2.5 times as many Hispanic children as white children were uninsured. (*Health Insurance Status of Children in America, First Half 1996-2006*, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, June 2007) http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/data_files/publications/st172/stat172.pdf
- Being uninsured “has a large negative impact on almost all aspects of health care quality and access.” (*2006 National Healthcare Disparities Report*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research, December 2006) <http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/nhdr06/nhdr06report.pdf>
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Hispanics are less likely than blacks or whites to have had a Pap smear within the last 3 years or a mammogram within the last

2 years. (*Health, United States, 2006*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, November 2006) <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/hus06.pdf#007>

- In Virginia:
 - A 2003 study of Hispanics in Richmond found that the majority said they or a family member needed medical care in the past year but were unable to get it, and only 5% received dental care when they needed it. (*Bon Secours/Central Va. Health Planning Agency Immigrant Health Needs Assessment*, August 2003) <http://www.bonsecours.com/newsevents/pdf/RichImmHlthPlnRprt.pdf>
 - A 2006 survey of Hispanic families in Richmond found that 65% are “very worried” about getting or finding healthcare. (*Latino Needs Assessment*, December 2006) [http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/CLAS_Act/researchresources/documents/Latino%20Needs%20Assessment%20\(English\)\[1\].pdf](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/CLAS_Act/researchresources/documents/Latino%20Needs%20Assessment%20(English)[1].pdf)
 - From 2002-2004, Hispanics had the lowest percentage of mothers beginning prenatal care in the first trimester. (*Health, United States, 2006*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, November 2006) <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/hus06.pdf#007>

Hope for the future

- According to a study published in the January/February 2006 issue of *Health Affairs*:
 - Increasing the proportion of RNs per patient could help save lives, decrease the length of hospital stays and prevent complications without an increase in cost.
 - Hiring 37,000 RNs to replace LPNs would cost \$811 million – but could yield long-term savings of \$1.8 billion. <http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/content/full/25/1/204>

The VCU School of Nursing is committed to improving healthcare in Virginia by developing more baccalaureate-prepared RNs through its RN-BS Weekend Program. The VCU RN-BS Weekend Program lets RNs earn their BS in Nursing while working full-time. With weekend classes in locations across Virginia as well as online, the RN-BS Weekend Program offers busy RNs the flexibility and convenience they need.

Thanks to a three-year grant from HRSA (the Health Resources and Services Administration), the VCU RN-BS Weekend Program is working to increase the number of Hispanic/Spanish-speaking nurses in Virginia. This initiative is an important step in strengthening Virginia’s ability to care for its changing population.

Learn more at <http://www.nursing.vcu.edu/RN-BS/index.html>.

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