Resolving the great resignation in the nursing workforce

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Resolving the “Great Resignation” in the Nursing Workforce

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The “Big Quit” or the “Great Resignation”

Defined as an “ongoing economic trend in which employees resign from their jobs en masse”

Massive registered nurse (RN) exodus from employment, particularly from inpatient, front-line caregiver roles.

RN Shortage > Financial Health
November 2021 with almost 5 million resignations recorded in all industries

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that healthcare is one of the top 3 industries that was impacted, falling just behind the hotel and food service industries.

In November 2021, total healthcare resignations came in just under 600,000. Recent data reflect a decline but again surpassing pre-COVID numbers.

The number of RNs intending to leave their inpatient care patients has increased from 22% to 32% as reported in January 2022.

The problem is even greater in the rural areas which accounts for almost 60% of the shortage.
Slowing Down But...

Employers are facing:
- Fierce competition for talent
- Intense hiring demands

Employees will continue to:
- Rethink careers
- Working conditions
- Long-term Goals
Investing in Reversal

Health Care Organization Challenges:

- Lucrative External Agencies and Travel contracts up by 132% (AHA, 2021)
- Overtime hours increased by 50% between 2020 and 2021 (AHA, 2021)

Counter Strategies:

- Aggressive compensation packages for permanent staff
  - Robust hourly and shift differentials
  - Retention bonuses
  - Sign-on bonuses
  - Enhanced 401 K programs
  - Increased Paid Time Off
  - Child Care
The costs to our health care systems are high and unsustainable.

This problem is taking a heavy toll on health care.

The extent of the workforce shortage is a current public health crisis that demands immediate attention.
Parallels Between Academia and Hospitals

• Academic environments are also experiencing labor shortages because of the great resignation. The National Education Association reported approximately half of all educators were likely to resign or retire early (GBAO, 2022).

• Higher education job postings have recently increased by 16.5 percent for the education sector (Varghes, 2022).

• Reasons for educator resignations were reported as high workloads, stress, and increased levels of burnout (GBAO, 2022). The shortage of support staff and difficulty recruiting and retaining research assistants add to the workload and significantly slow research activities.
Front-line Nurses are Not the Only Shortage

The nurse faculty shortage, well documented before the pandemic, will continue to intensify because of the exodus of nurses leaving the profession.

• According to the National League for Nursing (2021) Deans’ and Directors’ Survey, 178 full-time faculty across 317 National League for Nursing member nursing schools resigned or retired early, with a stated reason of COVID-19.

• Currently, only 1.9 percent of the nursing workforce holds a doctoral degree, compared with the 58 percent of faculty vacancies that require a doctorate degree.

• Faculty Salaries lag up to 30%.  
  (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2020)
A shrinking nurse workforce reduces the pipeline for recruiting future faculty and reduces the number of nurses who may be interested in pursuing graduate education.

Requirements for Faculty:
• Advanced Degrees
• Specialty Certifications
• Experience – Teaching, Clinical, and or Research / Scholarships
As new graduates transition into the workforce, health care agencies are reporting the need to increase orientations and skills training to compensate for limited clinical exposure during the pandemic, adding additional demands on scarce resources.
Innovation and Revision is Needed

A common thread driving resignations across all organizations is the feeling of being devalued and burned out, with excessive workloads and lack of support.

Organizations can leverage their current resources to reduce workloads for clinical staff, share opportunities for advancement in careers, recognize employee expertise, and provide authentic experiential learning opportunities for students.

Depending on their level of training, students and faculty can partner with nurses and staff to provide for quality patient care needs as students work to master clinical competencies in preparation for transition into practice.
Employees are seeking:

- Flexible scheduling
- Personal well-being
- Purpose
- Competitive pay
- Healthy working conditions
- Skill development
- Professional growth
Improve Work Life Balance

Even before the pandemic, almost 40% of RNs reported their intent to leave their current position unless their employer offered more flexibility and work-life balance.

Experts in all industries emphasize that the Great Resignation will not reverse unless employee demands for flexibility are met.

We must find a balance between 24/7 SAFE staffing coverage and FLEXIBILITY.
Before the COVID pandemic, CNEs implemented tactics to shore up nursing resiliency. COVID significantly increased the criticality of supporting both the physical and emotional needs of a battered workforce.

Equipping of frontline managers to monitor staff distress levels and organizational programs that equip staff with resilience-building activities, namely, mindfulness, gratitude, nutrition, and exercise.
A Purpose or “Calling”

As defined, a professional calling is one that is triggered by a higher power, the needs of society, country, or family, providing a sense of purpose and, ultimately, producing greater good result.

- Story Telling
- Collective Reflections

Prioritizing legacy retention strategies remains essential; however, responding to employees seeking fair compensation, flexibility, personal well-being, and a sense of purpose is key.
Current State of Nursing

**Nursing Workforce**
- 10% of the nursing workforce are NGRNs and projected to grow to 15% by 2026
- 60% of NGRNs leave their position one year
- Up to 25% permanently exit the profession
- 80,000 nursing students were turned away due to nursing school challenges and faculty shortages

**Nursing Vacancy**
- 1 million RNs to retire by 2030
- Nursing vacancy rate doubled from 2020 to 2021
- Nursing turnover at an all-time national high at 20%
- 32% of RNs say they are likely to leave the direct care role, up from 22% in Feb 2021 (AB, 2022)

**Literature Review**
- Professional commitment = Retention
- Organizational support for professional development
- The quest for lifelong learning
- Commitment + Support + Learning = Prosperous Career
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