

The Nursing Home RN: Quality Implications, Supply/Demand Realities

Betty Rambur, DNSc, RN; Mary Val Palumbo, DNP, APRN; Barbara McIntosh, PhD
University of Vermont
College of Nursing and Health Sciences
105 Rowell
Burlington, VT 05405-0068 USA
betty.rambur@uvm.edu

Field: Clinical Practice/Health

Subject: Health Services Research

Key Words: Nursing home, staff, shortage

The nursing shortage is a growing international phenomenon, with mounting evidence of a serious impact on quality of care. The purpose of this method triangulation study is to explore the factors impacting quality deficiencies in nursing home residents, using a single US state as a laboratory for analysis. The study consists of four parts:

1. A secondary analysis correlating nursing home deficiencies (n = 44 nursing homes, the total state population) and RN/LPN/ LNA hours.
2. Projected nursing supply/demand through 2020 (utilizing current population of RN's working in Vermont, n= 4,228, and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Nursing Workforce Supply Projection Tool)
3. A statewide analysis of nursing homes - Registered Nurse demand (n= 26, 59% response rate).
4. Analysis of the preferred employment sites of the older nurse (n=962).

These data suggest the following: There is a statistically significant correlation between the RN staff hours and selected deficiencies, but no correlation between LPN and LNA hours and deficiencies. Moreover, these data report a 19% statewide vacancy rate in nursing homes, substantially higher than other settings, and predict a widening gap between supply and demand over the next two decades. Finally, these data suggest that aging nurses differentially prefer work settings of less acuity, which may provide an opportunity to increase the supply of RNs available for nursing home employment, if appropriate interventions are taken now. Implications for elder care, as well as recruitment and retention of professional nursing staff for their care, are discussed.