

## **Older Nurses: Satisfaction, Setting Preference, and Intention to Leave**

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The aging of the nursing workforce and the corollary nursing shortage is a global trend with broad implications for patient care. The average age of the American nurse today is 45.2 years (Spratley, Johnson, Sochalski, Spritz, & Spencer, 2000), and by 2005 significant numbers will reach age 55, the age when RN's have historically started to leave the labor market (Minnick, 2000). The purpose of this descriptive workforce research was to utilize a single US state as a comprehensive laboratory in which to assess current older nurses' employment behaviors, as a basis for re-examining recruitment and retention policies.

The total population of registered nurses in one US state was surveyed and those who reported to be currently working (n=4228) were analyzed by age cohort and population density of practice site. Two older nurse cohorts, the 50-55 cohort (n= 952) and the 55+ cohort (n= 962), were contrasted, both with each other and the total group, in domains that include satisfaction, work setting, intention to leave their position, and clients served. Both older cohorts were more satisfied than the overall sample, and less likely to leave their current position. When compared to the 50-55 age group and the overall sample, the older group was substantially more likely to be caring for geriatric clients and employed in settings of less patient acuity. Timely attention to the older nurse recruitment/retention may serve as an important contribution toward addressing the looming nursing shortage.

