



POSITION STATEMENT

The Nursing Human Resources Challenge of the 21st Century

ACEN's Position

ACEN believes that the current health care system cannot be sustained unless immediate action is taken to address the growing shortage of nurses in Canada and across the world. For this reason ACEN strongly recommends that jurisdictions across Canada:

1. Review recommendations described in the Pan Canadian Human Resources Study that focus on mitigation of the impact of the growing nursing shortage,
2. Immediately develop and implement strategies that will increase the supply and retention of nurses, and
3. Maximize the use of technology to support care delivery.

In addition, ACEN recommends that attention be directed toward supporting nurses to work to the full scope of their knowledge and skills, and exploring new roles for them within the multi-professional health care team.

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Background

As a result of an aging nursing workforce, cut-backs to nursing education programs in the 1990's and increased demand for nursing in all health care sectors, every province/territory is facing a significant nursing shortage that will continue to grow over the next ten years.

The recently published Pan Canadian Health Human Resources Planning Study (Nursing Study Sector Corporation, 2005), offers a series of recommendations that will help to mitigate the impact of this shortage. ACEN believes that the implementation of these recommendations is essential to enhance nursing resource availability and productivity. In particular, ACEN endorses the following recommendations:

- Support the provincial jurisdictions' capacity to develop, implement and evaluate innovative service delivery models that meet population health needs and share results across jurisdictions;
- Develop targeted efforts to develop a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce that can respond to population health needs;
- Understand health providers' roles based on scopes of practice and skills;
- Develop targeted efforts to recruit Aboriginal people to health careers;
- Accelerate and expand the assessment and integration of internationally trained health care graduates
- Increase the capacity to address health and safety issues and reduce work-related illness, injuries and absenteeism.

In addition to these pan-Canadian Human Resources Sector Study recommendations, two other strategies are key to improving nursing productivity:

- Maximize the use of technology that will support nurses to focus on direct care delivery, and
- Enhance the availability of information and data that will facilitate the delivery of nursing care.

Lastly, despite all the best efforts, the shortages of health care providers and the impact of an aging population on service demand will require decision makers to explore opportunities to redesign service delivery. Implicit in this redesign will be the need to maximize the scopes of practice of all disciplines, most particularly nursing, and to ensure effective collaboration among all providers to reduce duplication and enhance safe care delivery. One strategy to accomplish this is to remove existing legislative and cultural barriers to providers enacting their full scope of practice. Another is to build understanding among providers about each others scope of practice through co-education. A third strategy is to explore opportunities for nurses and other providers stretch beyond the current boundaries of their roles to support and sustain health service delivery.

References

Building the Future: An Integrated Strategy for Nursing Human Resources in Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Final Report: May, 2005. Nursing Study Sector Corporation.

Building the Future: An Integrated Strategy for Nursing Human Resources in Canada: Research Synthesis Report, Ottawa, Ontario, May, 2005: Nursing Sector Study Corporation

Inter-professional Health Human Resources Initiative: Collaboration for Patient Centered Care: Expert Stakeholders Group Meeting, Ottawa, Ontario, February 23-24, 2006