



Quality Nursing Education National Insights

Introduction

As the national voice for nursing education, research, and scholarship in Canada, the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) speaks for our [member schools of nursing](#) who offer baccalaureate and/or graduate programs in nursing.

Following a two-year battle with a global pandemic that seriously challenged Canada's already complex health care system, schools of nursing are fighting to sustain high quality of nursing education in the face of threats on multiple fronts.

Through the [Quality Nursing Education National Insights Portal](#), CASN shares insights from our member schools about the challenges and strategies to address them. Centralizing insights and key messages from schools of nursing across Canada offers national support to local initiatives. Users are encouraged to reference what they find helpful and/or download the content in English or French for advocacy purposes in their local context.



Critical Nursing Shortage

No shortcuts – Caring for quality nurse education

Canada's health care system is experiencing nursing shortages due to unsustainable working conditions compounded by the pandemic and the increasing demands facing new graduates.

The quality of nursing education is critical to retention of both new and experienced nurses who are leaving the profession as a result of an increasingly unstable and unforgiving work environment.

Cutting corners to increase the number of nursing graduates will not produce a safe or a sustainable workforce.

Did you know?

Nursing graduates lacking the appropriate academic preparation for the profession and/or appropriate transition to practice support are liable to leave the workforce within one to two years (Sandler, 2018).¹

The solution to the problem is not to rush nursing students through their education programs or cut corners to save costs. Nursing education programs are designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they will need to see this nation through to better health. The public and our governments need to address the working conditions leading to the nursing shortage in the short term and support the long-term solution to the current health care crisis – which has always been a strong educational preparation of practical nurses, registered nurses, and nurse practitioners as well as entry-to-practice support for all new nursing graduates.

Investment in nursing education and the inclusion of nurse educators in developing strategies to address the current health care workforce crisis are crucial.

There are several areas in nursing education that offer potential solutions to a sustainable nursing workforce.

1. Increase the clinical competence and retention of registered nurse graduates.
2. Increase the number of new registered nurses without sacrificing quality.
3. Increase the number of internationally educated nurses entering the nursing workforce.

Invest in nursing education and include nurse educators in developing strategies to address the current health care workforce crisis.

¹ Sandler, M (2018). Why are new graduate nurses leaving the profession in their first year of practice. Canadian Journal of Emergency Nursing · Vol. 41, No. 1, Spring 2018 <https://cjen.ca/index.php/cjen/issue/view/7>

Supporting new graduate transition

New graduates require a robust orientation program, a progressive workload, guidance, supervised practice, topical learning workshops, and support for at least six months and up to a year. By supporting their transition to practice through residency programs, we can increase the clinical competence and retention of registered nurse graduates.

New graduate transition support is critical for a retainable nursing workforce.

Increase the number of IENs and cut the red tape

Through more effective collaboration with schools of nursing and nursing regulatory bodies, we can develop more standardized bridging programs offered by post-secondary institutions, reducing the wait-time required for IENs to transition into practice. This can increase the number of experienced nurses entering the workforce significantly and alleviate nursing shortages.

Increase the number of RNs without sacrificing quality

Through advanced standing baccalaureate nursing programs for individuals with a degree in another discipline, we can effectively increase the number of new RNs without sacrificing the quality of their education. These programs run throughout the full year (four rather than two terms a year) and are, therefore, normally completed in two years without any reduction in the curriculum. There is a high demand for admission into these programs and their graduates typically excel as nurses.

Did you know?

Multiple studies in the United States and in Australia have shown that residency programs increase the safety, clinical competence, and job satisfaction of new graduates, while reducing the employer's turnover costs (Hansen, 2018).²

CASN offers a structured, competency-based [Residency Program](#) that supports the integration of nursing graduates into the workforce who are competent, emotionally resilient, and retainable. The Residency Program was developed for health care institutions in response to the increasing demands facing new graduates. Program costs are paid by the health institution (the employer) or funded by government partners (fully or partially). There is no cost to nursing graduates. From advanced beginner to competent registered nurse, [CASN's Residency Program](#) is helping reduce nursing shortages by growing a sustainable, retainable nursing workforce with increased capacity and competence. For information about the program, contact CASN's [Jessica Pearce Lamothe](#).

We currently have interested hospitals who are looking for government Residency Program sponsors.

² Reference: Hansen, J. (2018). Nurse Residency Program Builder (2nd ed.). HCPro Inc.

Conclusion

Maintaining Canada's high quality of nursing education is critical to the health and well-being of Canadians. Nursing is a complex and emotionally demanding profession. It requires an in-depth theoretical and scientific foundation, strong clinical reasoning skills, solid clinical judgement, honed technical skills, compassion, caring, and emotional resilience. Nursing incompetence or nursing error can put patients' lives in jeopardy. Maintaining the high-quality of Canadian health care must remain paramount.

CASN and our member schools of nursing are working tirelessly to maintain high-quality nursing education in Canada, and we look forward to strengthening alliances through communication, cooperation, and collaboration on strategies to resolve the current health human resource issues and rejuvenate the health care workforce.

For more information on this resource and how you can support Canadian schools of nursing, please [contact us](#).