Is the Grass Still Greener: Examining Trends in Canada to U.S Nurse Migration

Ontario Health Human Resources Network
Fireside Chat - June 14, 2011

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Advisor on Tap

Linda McGillis Hall, PhD, FAAN, FCAHS,
Professor, MOHLTC Nursing Senior Career Award Recipient,
Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing, University of Toronto

- First Canadian nurse to be inducted as an American Academy of Nursing International Fellow (2007),
- Inaugural recipient of the Canadian Nurses Association Order of Merit for Nursing Research in Canada (2008),
- Inducted as a fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences: 2010.

*Linda’s Research has earned:*
- a Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care [MOHLTC] Nursing Senior Career Research Award (2009-2012),
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research [CIHR] New Investigator Award (2002-2007), and

*Research program:*
- health human resources, the nursing work environment and how this influences nurse migration and nurses’ health, and patient safety outcomes of nursing practice.

**Today’s Fireside Chat**

• **Nurses are a fundamental building block in the health care system in Ontario because of their central role in the provision of quality care and patient safety.** Throughout the late 1990’s, restructuring initiatives in health care settings resulted in redeployment and reductions in nursing resources. Little attention was focused on retention to the profession. As a result, an unstable workforce emerged, with Ontario and Canada facing a nursing shortage as nurses have migrated to other countries, primarily the US for full-time work.

• A number of market forces and generational differences have emerged in the work environment, and evidence suggests that new nursing graduates are not being retained in the profession and in the country.

• In this Fireside Chat, the Advisor on Tap will discuss her research findings examining trends in nurse migration to the US over several years and explore the implications on the findings for policy makers, nurses and health care system managers and leaders.
Study Team

Principal Investigator:
Dr. Linda McGillis Hall

Co-investigators:
Dr. Cheryl Jones, UNC Chapel Hill
Dr. George H. Pink, UNC Chapel Hill
Dr. Peggy Leatt, UNC Chapel Hill
Dr. Michael Gates, UC San Diego
Dr. Jessica Peterson, Bloomberg Nursing UofT

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Context

  Canadian supply  274,274  (2007)

• US demand > 1.2 million new and replacement nurses (by 2014)
  Canadian demand - 113,000 (by 2016)

• 20.2% (i.e., 20,359) of foreign-educated nurses in US came from Canada (2004)
Context

• Given these numbers, it is appears that substantial numbers of our available Canadian nurses migrate to the US annually

• Ongoing trend

• Need to have a clearer understanding of why this continues to occur

Earlier Work

• Higher proportions of Canadian-educated RNs who work in the US were working full-time than US educated RNs

• Higher proportions of Canadian-educated RNs who work in US held one job only compared with US RNs

• Higher proportions of Canadian-educated RNs who work in US worked in direct patient care roles

(McGillis Hall et al, 2009, International Nursing Review)
Survey Results

When did Canadian Nurses Migrate to North Carolina?

(McGillis Hall et al, 2009, Healthcare Policy)

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Survey Results

Why do Canadian Nurses Migrate to North Carolina?

(McGillis Hall et al, 2009, Healthcare Policy)

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Focus Groups

• “The hospital I was working in was a very small hospital and it was basically someone had to retire or die for you to get a job because there weren’t any openings. It didn’t seem like there was ever going to be any openings so we moved down here to gain full-time employment.”
  
  (McGillis Hall et al, 2009, Healthcare Policy

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Focus Groups

• “The fact that they [US] offered you a full-time job, I mean that makes you feel valued rather than you’re just this disposable person that they’re going to call when they need you [in Canada].”

  (McGillis Hall et al, 2009, Healthcare Policy

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Focus Groups

• “Part of it is the pay but at the same time I need to know their [hospital] reputation in the way they treat nurses, how they handle conflicts, you know, with nurses and I make decisions based on that. I look at the way they treat their nurses.”

(McGillis Hall et al, 2009, Healthcare Policy)

Results

Disincentives to Return to Work in Canada

(McGillis Hall et al, 2009, Healthcare Policy)
Returning to Work In Canada

• The majority of respondents (72%) expressed no interest in returning to work in Canada

• Those who indicated an interest were more likely to have emigrated to the US more recently

(McGillis Hall et al, 2009, Healthcare Policy)

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Aims of This Study

• To describe Canadian-educated nurses currently working in the US;

• To compare at an aggregate level Canadian-educated nurses working in the US to US RNs;

• Conduct these comparisons over time (using 4 years of data)

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Methods


Results

Database Comparisons
Gender Comparisons

• The past decade has marked an increase in male nurses going to US (almost doubled) and remaining that way;

• While US is also showing higher proportions of men in their workforce, the percentage change in no where as large
Marital Status Comparisons

Canadian Educated in US

US Nurses

Marked and ongoing increase in married nurses moving to the US (may be migrating with husbands who have jobs there; may represent those who move there and settle down and get married);

Whereas in US the pattern has remained unchanged over the years
Age Comparisons

- Average age of both Canadian-educated and US educated nurses in the US workforce is now 46 years;

- Has gone up from 42 in US and 44 in Canada in 1996

Educational Preparation

- Increasing numbers of Baccalaureate RNs moving to the US (rather than diploma-prepared)

- At same time US is increasing their numbers of Baccalaureate-prepared RNs;

- Need to consider factors that may be contributing to that including our move to Baccalaureate as entry to practice
Educational Preparation

• As well proportion of Canadian-educated nurses with graduate degrees who move to the US is also increasing;

• US also has seen an increase in graduate level degree nurses in the workforce

Educational Enrollment

• It would appear that Canadian-educated nurses are more likely to enroll in ongoing education once they move to the US to work;

• May be because of incentives offered during recruitment

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Full-time Employment

- Canadian-educated nurses were more likely to be employed full-time than US nurses in the earlier years of this analysis—however this has declined markedly in the final year of the analysis (2008) where they were less likely to be employed full-time than their US colleagues.

- US nurses are increasingly employed full-time (high in most recent data).

Employed in One Position

- Over the years Canadian-educated nurses were more likely to hold one job, while US nurses have shown an increase in having multiple employment (a difference of 3-4 percentage points).

- This trend changed in 2008 with US nurses outnumbering Canadian-educated nurses in this pattern.
Site of Work

• Canadian-educated nurses were more likely to work in hospitals than their US colleagues who tend to be employed more in ambulatory and out-patient areas

• No change has been noted over the years

Patient-Care Role

• Change in pattern of employment for Canadian-educated nurses

• Initially were more likely to be employed in patient care roles (8% change seen)

• Trend towards them being employed in management (3% increase)
Discussion

• Canadian-educated nurses continuing to move to the US

• Reasons for mobility appear to be changing

• Economy and recession may have had an influence on changing trends in employment patterns

Opportunities

• We have preliminary research evidence of factors that nurses consider to be important when making decisions about choice of work setting and workplace mobility

• We need to move beyond the ‘myths’

• This information is key to informing future policy directions related to the retention of nurses in Canada
Thank you!

• Publications:
  

• For further information:
  [http://www.mcgillishall.com](http://www.mcgillishall.com)

Thanks for joining in!

[www.chnet-works.ca](http://www.chnet-works.ca)

Contact [animateur@chnet-works.ca](mailto:animateur@chnet-works.ca) for information about partnering with CHNET-Works!

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