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NCSBN Research Brief

Report of Findings from the 2001 Employers Survey

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National Council
of State Boards of Nursing, Inc.

Research Services

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J.S.
L.C.

Executive Summary

Empiric evidence from National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) RN practice analyses has demonstrated that associate degree and baccalaureate degree graduates are hired into the same types of positions and perform the same tasks within their first six months of practice; however, the employers of entry-level nurses have not been systematically surveyed about their actual hiring and employment practices. This survey addressed those practices and also asked employers to rate new RNs and LPNs on their preparation for various practice tasks.

Specific Research Questions

1. Do employers prefer hiring newly licensed nurses with specific types of educational preparation?
2. Do employers prefer hiring or promoting experienced nurses with specific types of educational preparation?
3. Do employers differentiate RN job descriptions, pay scales, or job performance expectations by educational preparation?
4. Do employers perceive newly licensed nurses to be adequately prepared for entry-level practice?
5. How do employer perceptions of preparation for practice compare to those of newly licensed RNs and LPNs?

Survey Tool

A survey was specifically created for this study.

The survey contained four demographic questions for the nursing administrator completing the survey.

The survey was composed of questions related to the numbers of entry-level nurses hired in the last 12 months, their educational preparation, and the preference of the respondent's employing institution for graduates of one or more types of nursing education programs.

The survey also asked respondents to rate the preparation of newly licensed nurses for specific practice duties. The respondents were asked to provide ratings for the newly licensed nurses they had hired within the past 12 months.

Finally, the survey contained questions about preferences when hiring or promoting nurses with experience beyond entry-level.

Finally, the survey asked about the desired "skill mix" of the respondent's employing institution, and about any differentiation of job descriptions, pay scales, or job performance expectations by educational preparation.

Rating Scale Used

A rating scale of "Yes, definitely," "Yes, somewhat," or "No" was used for selected survey questions

because the literature has demonstrated that the five-point “Excellent” to “Poor” scale and other similar scales tend to demonstrate a ceiling effect, i.e., most respondents answer Very Good or Excellent even when they are actually not satisfied. This scale has been found to overcome that tendency and is commonly used by the well-known Picker Commonwealth Foundation in its patient satisfaction surveys. The scale is generally converted to dichotomous designations with “Yes, definitely” considered the desired answer and the percent of the sum of the “Yes, somewhat” and “No” responses representing “problems” or “opportunities for improvement.”

Sample

Surveys were sent to 993 acute care facilities and 509 nursing homes from across the United States. Twenty acute care facilities were randomly selected from each state’s listing in the 2000 American Hospital Association (AHA) General Accredited Community Facilities. Ten nursing homes were randomly selected from those listed for each state in a database of federally certified nursing homes downloaded from the Medicare Web site. The survey was addressed to the nursing administrator of each facility.

Survey Process

A five-stage mailing process was used to collect data. A letter was sent announcing the arrival of the survey and explaining its purpose. The survey was sent five days after the letter. One week after the initial

survey mailing, a reminder postcard was sent to all participants. A second postcard was mailed a week later to non-respondents. Another survey, cover letter and return envelope was mailed to continued non-respondents two weeks following the second postcard.

Results

Return Rates

Of the total 1,502 surveys mailed to nursing administrators, 70 were returned with bad addresses. A total of 798 surveys were returned for an overall 56% return rate. Nursing administrators from 513 acute care facilities and 241 nursing homes returned surveys. Forty of the respondents indicated that they worked in “other” types of facilities.

Respondent Demographics

The majority of the respondents (57.7% overall, 44% acute care, and 86.7% long-term care) reported holding the title of director. The respondents reported an average of 13 years (SD 8.6 years) in management, and 5.6 years (SD 6 years) in their current positions.

Hiring of Newly Licensed Nurses by Respondents

Of those responding to the survey, 68.1% reported hiring ADN graduates in the past 12 months, 49.7% reported hiring BSN graduates, and 57.8% of the respondents reported hiring LPN/VNs. The respondents’ institutions had hired a total of 4,263 ADN graduates, 2,804 BSN graduates, and 2,057 LPN/VNs. On average 5.7 ADN (SD 12.3), 3.6 BSN (SD 10.5), and 2.6 LPN/VN (SD 5.2) newly licensed graduates had been hired in the past 12 months.

Educational Level Preferences

When Hiring Newly Licensed Nurses

Overall, only 1.5% of the respondents reported requiring* a BSN for all nursing positions; 2.5% reported requiring a BSN for some specific positions. Sixteen percent reported having a preference** for a specific type or types of educational preparation when hiring newly licensed RNs. Fifteen percent of all respondents favored graduates with a BSN.

Adequacy of Educatio

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Report of Findings from the 2001 Employers Survey



Methodology

This section provides a description of the methodology used to conduct a survey of employers of nurses. Descriptions of the sample selection and data collection procedures are provided, as well as information about response rates, data collection instrument, assurance of confidentiality, and the degree to which participants were representative of the population of employers.

Specifically, the research questions were:

1. Do employers prefer hiring newly licensed nurses with specific types of educational preparation?
2. Do employers prefer hiring or promoting experienced nurses with specific types of educational preparation?
3. Do employers differentiate RN job descriptions, pay scales, or job performance expectations by educational preparation?
4. Do employers perceive newly licensed nurses to be adequately prepared for entry-level practice?
5. How do employer perceptions of preparation for practice compare to those of newly licensed RNs and LPNs?

Sample Selection and Data Collection Procedures

The 2001 *Employers Survey* was a non-experimental, descriptive study of employers of newly licensed nurses. A stratified random sample of 1,502 employing facilities was selected, and stratified by type of setting and by area of the country. Surveys were sent to 993 acute care facilities and 509 nursing homes

from across the United States. Twenty acute care facilities were randomly selected from each state's listing in the 2000 *Acute Care Hospital Association (AHA) Group Accredited Facilities Directory*. Ten nursing homes were randomly selected from those listed for each state in a database of federally certified nursing homes downloaded from the Medicare Web site. The survey was addressed to the nursing administrator of each facility.

A five-stage mailing process was used to collect data. A letter was sent announcing the arrival of the survey and explaining its purpose. The survey was sent five days after the letter. One week after the initial survey mailing a reminder postcard was sent to all participants. A second postcard was mailed a week later to non-respondents. Another survey, cover letter and return envelope was mailed to continued non-respondents two weeks following the second postcard.

A total of 70 surveys were sent to bad addresses. Responses were received from 798 overall respondents for a 56% response rate. Five hundred and thirteen of the respondents identified their agencies as acute care, and 241 reported working in long-term care facilities. Forty of the respondents reported that their agencies fell into another category.

Data Collection Instrument

A survey was created specifically for this study.

The survey contained four demographic questions for the

nursing administrator completing the survey.

Section 2.1 was composed of questions related to the numbers of entry-level nurses hired in the last 12 months, their educational preparation, and the preference of the respondent's employing institution for graduates of one or more types of nursing education programs.

Section 2.2 asked respondents to rate the preparation of newly licensed nurses for specific practice duties. The respondents were asked to provide ratings for newly licensed nurses hired within the past 12 months.

Section 2.3 contained questions about preferences when hiring or promoting nurses with experience beyond entry-level.

Section 2.4 asked about the desired "skill mix" of the respondent's employing institution, and about any differentiation of job descriptions, pay scales, or job performance expectations by educational preparation.

Rating Scale Used

A rating scale of "Yes, definitely," "Yes, somewhat," or "No" was used for selected survey questions because the literature has demonstrated that the five-point "Excellent" to "Poor" scale and other similar scales tend to demonstrate a ceiling effect, i.e., most respondents answer Very Good or Excellent even when they are actually not satisfied. This scale

has been found to demonstrate a ceiling effect (T*0.126934w(tionents cyd theiompos-)Tnotd forbyT*0.01551 T0.37)

Summary

A data collection instrument was disseminated to 1,502 employers of newly licensed nurses selected at random from among all employing facilities in the United States. A 54% response rate was obtained. Seven hundred and ninety-eight employers participated in the study.

Survey Findings

Information was obtained about those responding to the survey on behalf of their institutions, the hiring preferences of their institutions, and the perceived adequacy of preparation of newly licensed nurses.

Respondent Demographics

Most respondents held administrative positions in their institutions (Table 1). The majority of the respondents (57.7% overall, 44% acute care, and 86.7% long-term care) reported holding the title of director. Respondents reported an average of 13 years (SD 8.6 years) in management (Table 2), and 5.6 years (SD 6.1 years) in their current positions (Table 3).

Hiring of Newly Licensed Nurses by Respondents

Of those responding to the survey, 68.1% of employers reported hiring ADN graduates in the past 12 months, 49.7% reported hiring BSN graduates, and 57.8% of the respon-

	Overall		Acute Care		LTC	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
Vice President	26.2	208	37.7	193	2.1	5
Director	57.7	458	44.1	226	86.7	208
Manager	6.2	49	8.0	41	2.1	5
Assistant Mgr	1.5	12	2.0	10	0.8	2
Supervisor	1.5	12	1.8	9	0.4	1
Other	6.9	55	6.5	33	7.9	19

dents reported hiring LPN/VNs (Table 4). Of those employers hiring new BSN graduates, most were acute care facilities. Only 24% of long-term facilities hired BSN graduates during the past 12 months. Both acute care and long-term facilities hired newly licensed LPN/VNs.

The respondents' institutions had hired a total of 4,263 ADN graduates, 2,804 BSN graduates, and 2,057 LPN/VNs (Table 5). On average across all responding institutions, 5.7 ADN (SD 12.3), 3.6 BSN (SD 10.5), and 2.6 LPN/VN (SD 5.2) newly licensed graduates had been hired in the past 12 months. Although acute care facilities hired the largest numbers of new graduates in all categories, long-term care facilities hired more LPN/VNs than RNs.

Educational Level Preferences When Hiring Newly Licensed Nurses

Overall, only 1.5% of respondents required* a BSN for all entry-level nursing positions and 2.5% reported requiring a BSN for some entry-level positions (Table 6).

Table 2. Years in Management

	Overall	Acute	LTC
n	794	512	240
Range	0-63	0-40	0-63
Average	13.4	14.3	12.1
SD	8.6	8.0	9.6

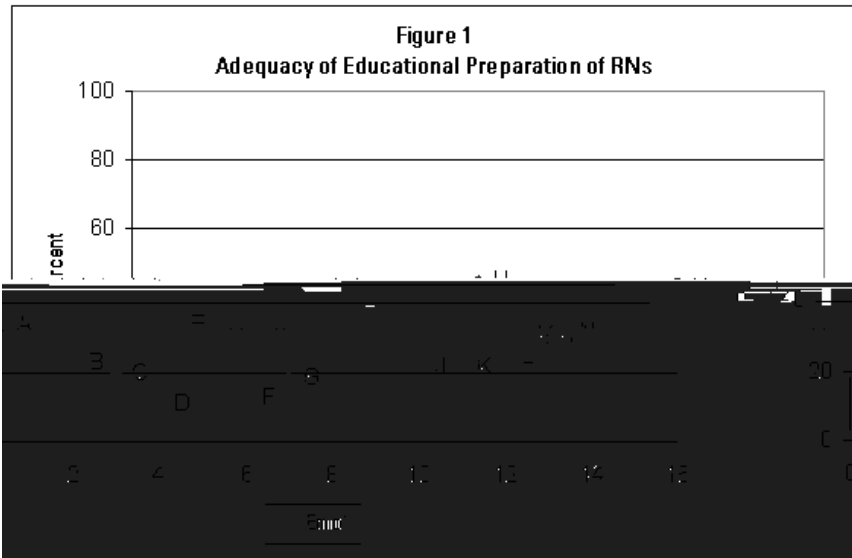
Table 3. Years in Current Position

	Overall	Acute	LTC
n	795	512	241
Range	0-39	0-30	0-39
Average	5.6	6.1	4.9
SD	6.1	6.2	6.0

One hundred and thirty-two (16%) employers reported having a preference** for a specific type or types of educational preparation when hiring newly licensed RNs (... 7). One hundred and twenty, or 15% of total respondents, favored graduates with a BSN, 5% favored graduates with an ADN, and 4% favored graduates with a diploma.

Adequacy of Educational Preparation

Respondents were asked to rate the adequacy of preparation of the newly licensed nurses hired by their facilities. They rated the new RNs on 14



Key for Figure 1
Practice Setting Tasks - RN

- A Perform thorough physical assessments
- B Recognize abnormal physical findings
- C Recognize abnormal diagnostic lab findings
- D Respond to emergency assessments

assessments

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N

N

af

LPN/VN rating was 36% for “Administer medications by common routes,” and six of the nine remaining tasks were rated below 20% or lower.

The employers were asked if the various groups of newly licensed nurses were prepared to provide safe, effective care (Appendix 8). “Yes, definitely” ratings were given to ADN graduates by 35% of respondents, to BSN graduates by 40%, to diploma graduates by 45%, and to LPN/VN graduates by 30%.

Many respondents were eloquent in their comments. A number felt that newly licensed nurses were ill-prepared for the realities of the practice setting, taking months to train at great expense to their institutions and increase in workload for their mentors. Example comments:

I feel that newly licensed nurses are not prepared for the realities of the practice setting. It takes months to train at great expense to their institutions and increase in workload for their mentors.

Table 8. School seniors

...I ...

... (...)

One respondent stated that her institution had stopped hiring new RNs because of the financial strain. Many stated that the educational preparation of the nurse was less important than a good attitude, maturity, and health care experience.

Many felt that new nurses had not been exposed to adequate amounts of clinical experience. Several comments included:

...
...
...

... I ...
... 10 ...
...
... I ...

Preferences When Hiring or Promoting Experienced Nurses

Respondents were much more likely to express a preference for BSN graduates when hiring experienced nurses for management or RN specialty positions (Table 9-11). Fifty-six percent of respondents had a prefer-

RN

Employers perceive newly licensed RNs and LPN/VNs to be inadequately prepared for basic prac-



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