Current Evidence on Employing IENs: LITERATURE REVIEW

Project: Partnering with Employers: Increasing Internationally Educated Nurse (IEN) Employment in Health care Organizations

Funded by:

NHSRU Nursing Health Services Research Unit
McMaster University
Ontario
Building a Case for Hiring IENs in Ontario

**Predicted Nursing Shortage in Canada for Next 8 Years + Need for Diverse Healthcare Workforce**

**More Openings than Nurses = Demand for IENs to Fill the Gap**

**Targeted Employer Engagement**
(Summit, Webinars, Presentations, Employer Manual)

**Nursing Shortage**
Health care employers in Canada are expected to face a substantial nursing shortage over the next eight years, without enough domestically trained nurses to fill the almost 160,000 projected job openings nationwide (Employment and Social Development Canada [ESDC], 2014).

**More Registered Nurses over 40 than Under**
Registered nurses in Ontario above the age of 40 outnumber those under 40 by 2:1. Close to 15% of RNs and 9% of RPNs were of retirement age (60+) in 2013 (CNO, 2015a).

**Canadian-Born Workforce Shrinking**
With many Canadians reaching retirement age and birthrates declining, the Canadian-born workforce is shrinking, but the need for skilled labour continues to expand. According to the Government of Canada (2012), “immigrants will continue to comprise a significant portion (and perhaps an increasing proportion) of new entrants to the labour market.”

**A Diverse Workforce Offers Tangible Benefits**
Skilled immigrants possess professional experience that employers can use to support labour force growth and stability (Conference Board of Canada, 2012). Studies demonstrate a diverse workforce benefits national investment and productivity, increases profit, and offers a direct return on investment (French et al., 2014; Herring, 2009). The link between a diverse nursing workforce and the capacity to provide more culturally competent and high-quality patient care is clear to nursing organizations and leaders (CNA, 2010, RNAO, 2014, RPNAO, 2014).

**The Employer’s Role is Key**
Despite the need for and benefits of hiring skilled immigrants, they remain underemployed (Mehler Paperny, 2014b; Menon, 2012). The Panel on Employment Challenges of New Canadians reported low levels of engagement and understanding among smaller employers (ESDC, 2015c). It noted that “the root of disengagement is employers’ risk averse-nature, which causes them to shy away from hiring immigrants unless they have significant human resources capacity and a philosophy geared towards the development of their workforce” (ESDC, 2015c, p. 11). However, the Panel also emphasized that “The role of the employer in the settlement process cannot be overstated” (ESDC, 2015c, p. 16).
Several large health care employers in Ontario have developed leading practices for IEN employment and integration.

**ORIENTATION, ONBOARDING, AND MENTORSHIP**

**IENS MAY HAVE TO ADJUST THEIR SKILL SETS** and professional roles to the Canadian context because their countries of origin may have different workplace cultures, protocols and nursing etiquettes.

**STUDIES DEMONSTRATE MENTORSHIP HELPS IENS ADJUST** to the Canadian work environment and increases their job satisfaction and chances of success (Newton et al., 2012).

**THE UNIT MANAGER, STAFF AND/OR PRECEPTOR/MENTOR IS ALSO NECESSARY** to help IENs feel confident. Support should involve job specific training, organizational competencies and social interaction. However, soft skills such as interpersonal communication, problem solving and critical thinking should also be emphasized.

**SUCCESSFUL IEN ONBOARDING INVOLVES NOT ONLY WELCOMING AND PROVIDING INFORMATION** about the organization to new employees, but in some cases, information on community supports, schools, licensing, and housing is also key (D’Aurizio, 2007).

**NURSES BENEFITED FROM THE MENTORSHIP, SUPPORT, LANGUAGE TRAINING, AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS** provided, according to Zizzo and Xu (2009) in an evaluation of several post-hire orientation programs for IENs. The authors highlighted the importance of evidence-based orientation programs in allowing IENs to transition safely and successfully.

**CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGIES**

**LARGER HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS IN ONTARIO HAVE IMPLEMENTED STRATEGIES** and practices to ensure they are inclusive and culturally competent. These may include recruiting, retaining and promoting a culturally diverse workforce that reflects the community.
ST. MICHAEL’S HOSPITAL (SMH) in Toronto has been a leader in IEN integration since 2005 and is recognized as one of the best employers of new Canadians. SMH provides Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs) with internship opportunities through a Career Bridge Program. The hospital offers a 16-week mentorship program to familiarize IENs with the Canadian healthcare system and a rigorous training program for IEPs and hospital staff.

HAMILTON HEALTH SCIENCES (HHS) in Hamilton also has a program aimed at integrating IENs into the workforce by building their communication skills and their clinical and cultural competencies. This includes a 96-hour language and communication course, a Learning Resource Simulation Library and a cultural competency awareness workshop.

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