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Nursing Health Services Research Unit -
Knowledge Translation & Exchange Program



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Understanding why nurses stay in their jobs

What is this research about?

There is a global shortage of nurses and many nurses voluntarily leave their workplaces before the normal age of retirement. Quality health care depends on a good supply of qualified nursing personnel. One way to minimize the impact of this shortage is to create strategies that discourage nurses from voluntarily leaving and promote nurse retention. In order for strategies to be effective, a clear understanding of the reasons that nurses decide to stay employed are needed.

A theoretical model, *Determinants of Nurse Intention to Remain Employed* was proposed. This model incorporates the following hypothesized reasons that nurses want to stay in their jobs: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, manager ability and support, burnout, work group cohesion and collaboration and personal characteristics.

The purpose of this study was to test this hypothesized model. Nurses were surveyed in order to examine reasons why nurses want to

remain employed in their current hospitals of employment.

What you need to know:

Researchers surveyed nurses to find out reasons why they intent to stay in their jobs or leave. Job satisfaction, personal characteristics of nurses, work group cohesion, and organizational commitment of nurses were all found to be significant determinants of nurses wanting to remain employed. While nurse burnout and nurse manager support were not found to be significant determinants, strong evidence suggests that they have indirect effects on nurses wanting to stay employed.

What did the researchers do?

A total of 8,456 Registered Nurses (RNs) and Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) working in medical, surgical or critical care areas in 75 Ontario hospitals completed nurse surveys. Survey concepts included: employment information, evaluation of quality of care, career intentions, history of injury, condition of



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practice environment, job satisfaction, discharge processes of care, and other demographic information. Surveys were studied to determine why nurses remain employed in or leave their jobs.

What did the researchers find?

Researchers found evidence to support four of the six categories proposed in the determinants of nurse intention to remain employed model and further revisions were made (Fig. 1).

- Job satisfaction
- Personal characteristics of nurses
- Work group cohesion and collaboration
- Organizational commitment of nurses

Evidence was not found to support direct effects of burnout or manager ability and support on nurses' intention to remain employed. These factors however, effect job satisfaction, and therefore have an indirect effect on intent to remain employed (Fig. 1)

The strongest predictors of nurses wanting to stay in their current jobs were: overall job satisfaction and years of employment in the current hospital.

Overall, findings suggested that nurses were more likely to remain employed in their current hospitals until retirement under the following circumstances:

- were older
- had higher overall job satisfaction had more years of employment in current hospital
- did not have a baccalaureate degree
- were more satisfied as a nurse
- were more satisfied with praise and recognition received at work

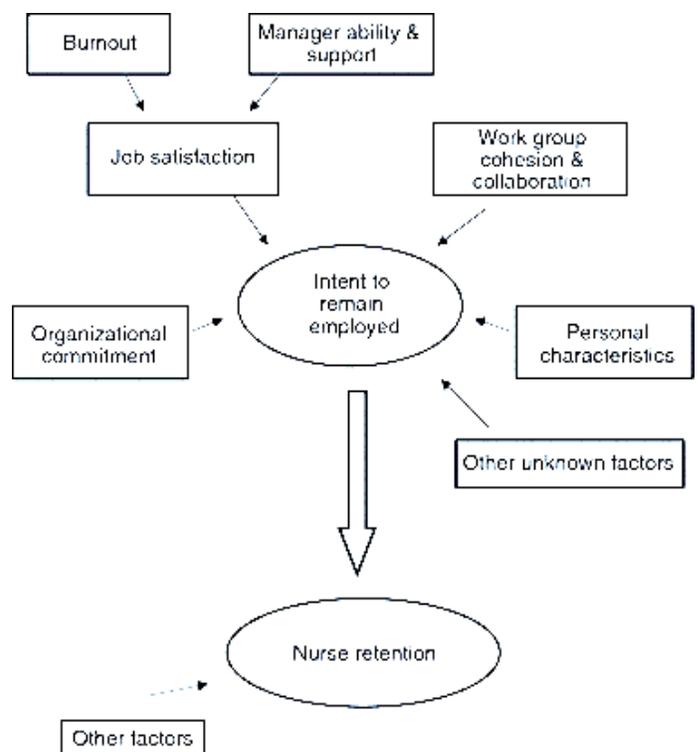


Figure 1. Revised Model – Determinants of nurse intention to remain employed

- were employed full-time
- were more satisfied with co-workers
- were RPNs rather than RNs
- were more satisfied with interaction opportunities at work
- reported more effective teamwork
- were female

How can you use this research?

This research can be used to help healthcare leaders and policy makers strengthen the reasons that nurses remain employed. Strategies that may strengthen intention to remain employed include:

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- Multidisciplinary team building exercises for work group members to collaborate together;
- Creating clear communication systems;
- Promote praise and recognition for nurse contributions;
- Establish a shared vision and goals.

Original Article:

To learn more about this study, we invite you to read the original research article:

Tourangeau, A.E., & Cranley, L.A. (2006). Nurse intention to remain employed: understanding and strengthening determinants. *Nursing and Health Care Management and Policy*,55(4) 497-509

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