

NEWS RELEASE

Grant Expands UB/NYU Study of Nurses' Work Decisions

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BUFFALO, N.Y. -- Keeping newly licensed nurses working in the profession is critical to solving the chronic nursing shortage experienced across the U.S., an issue nursing researchers at the University at Buffalo and New York University have been studying since 2005.

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Carol Brewer, Ph.D., associate professor in the UB School of Nursing, has received \$854,314 from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to continue her work on this issue into the next decade.

The funding is part of a \$4.1 million, eight-year grant from the foundation to Brewer and Christine T. Kovner, Ph.D., professor in NYU's College of Nursing and senior fellow at the Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing. Kovner is principal investigator on the grant and Brewer is co-investigator.

The study will track changes in the careers of a cohort of newly licensed nurses, which the researchers have surveyed twice over the past three years, and adds funding for three additional surveys: two comparative cohorts of newly licensed registered nurses (RNs) and a survey on how RN education affects quality of patient care.

"This grant continues our work about the work patterns of new RNs over time, which is particularly important both to the nursing profession and to our health-care system," said Brewer.

"Conventional wisdom has morphed into a 'the sky is falling' mentality," noted Brewer. "New nurses are leaving nursing in droves! Our research is the first to follow these nurses long enough to examine this supposition and determine the real story behind the career trajectories of new nurses. This is critical for health-care employers and policy makers in determining appropriate steps to recruit and retain nurses."

"New graduates of nursing programs who become registered nurses are essential to balancing the supply and demand for these professionals," said Kovner. "Therefore, it is vital that we understand the factors that promote the retention of newly licensed RNs, as well as factors that lead to the high turnover rates among them."

Their most recent study, published in the September 2007 issue of the American Journal of Nursing, collected data from 3,226 newly licensed nurses and established baseline data about the population. It showed that the top two priorities for hospitals to address if they wish to retain new nurses are improving nursing management and taking steps to reduce on-the-job stress.

Jean K. Brown, Ph.D., professor and dean of the UB School of Nursing, reiterated that retention of new graduates in the workforce is a critical issue in solving the nursing shortage.

"Applications to, and enrollments in, schools of nursing are rising dramatically, but if large numbers of new graduates leave the workforce in the first year or two of their practice, we are fighting a losing battle," said Brown. "The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation astutely recognizes this, and we are grateful for their continued support of Drs. Brewer and Kovner's extremely important research aimed at solving this retention problem."

Additional members of the research team are William Greene, Ph.D., NYU Stern School of Business, and Sean Corcoran, Ph.D., NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development.

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