

# Workforce Alert

*Latest information on hospitals' attraction and retention of talent:*

September 27, 2005

## Topics:

1. **New State Joins Nurse Licensure Compact**
2. **Examining Nurse Staffing Ratios**
3. **Hospital Employment Climbs in August**
4. **Increased Hospital Spending Driven by Demand, Advances**
5. **Studies Examine Medical Students' Specialty Choices**
6. **Med Students Feel Unsatisfied with Curricula**
7. **Survey Finds Growing Shortage of Pharmacy Managers**
8. **Coalition Proposes Changes to Speed Nurse Immigration**
9. **Remaking American Medicine**
10. **Job of the Month**

### **1. New State Joins Nurse Licensure Compact**

New Hampshire recently passes legislation to become the 19th state to join the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC). The state will begin working toward the implementation of NLC in 2006, and as NLC members, New Hampshire nurses will be allowed to practice in any state that belongs to NLC providing they comply with current state laws. New Hampshire will also participate in Nursys®, a licensure database used by NLC. Although Ohio is not currently part of NLC, many organizations across the state support the concept and further development is expected within the next few years. The Ohio Board of Nursing currently does participate in Nursys®.

### **2. Examining Nurse Staffing Ratios**

While not currently under discussion as a solution to the nurse shortage in Ohio, mandatory nurse-to-patient ratios are being implemented in California hospitals with some difficulty. The new one nurse per five patients ratio increases the demand for nurses, raising the salaries of California nurses to among the highest in the nation and forcing hospitals to close beds and direct patients to other emergency facilities. A recent study published in the journal *Policy, Politics & Nursing Practice* found the average total hours worked by each registered nurse is up more than 20 percent. The study also encouraged further research into the impact of the new ratio laws.

The OHA workforce committee continues to work as a group to make Ohio hospitals the best place to work and recently appointed a sub-committee to examine benchmarks hospitals can use to help measure their efforts to become highly attractive work environments. Those interested in serving on this sub-committee should contact Jean Scholz at 614.2221.7614 or [jeans@ohanet.org](mailto:jeans@ohanet.org).

### **3. Hospital Employment Climbs in August**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported employment at the nation's hospitals rose 0.22 percent in August to a seasonally adjusted 4,403,000 people. This number rose by 9,700 since July and by 88,900 from more than a year ago. Without seasonal adjustment, the numbers show hospitals employed 4,403,000 people in August, 1,600 more than in July and 90,100 more than a year ago. The nation's overall unemployment rate declined by one-tenth of a percentage point in August to 4.9 percent. *(Source: AHA News)*

### **4. Increased Hospital Spending Driven by Demand, Advances**

The rising costs of goods and services needed to provide hospital care accounted for more than half of the increase in spending on hospital care in recent years, according to a report released recently by the American Hospital Association. With the increased national workforce shortage, salaries and benefits accounted for much of the increase in hospital costs. The large aging population, the more intense care needs of this older population and the cost of medical advances are also contributing factors. Society faces a balancing act--weighing the benefits of improved care and longer lives with the growing cost of health care. Advances in medicine can dramatically improve the quality of life for patients, but it comes with higher costs.

### **5. Studies Examine Medical Students' Specialty Choices**

Recent graduates of the health professions are choosing their specializations based more on lifestyle and income. Women are more likely than men to choose pediatrics and African Americans are more likely than Caucasians to choose inner city environments. But all graduates are looking for higher incomes and shifts that allow for time to enjoy life outside of their careers. Specializations such as radiology, physical medicine, emergency medicine and dermatology all fall under the category of life-style friendly positions. *(AHA NewsNow)*

### **6. Med Students Feel Unsatisfied with Curricula**

In an American Medical Student Association survey of 322 students, more than a quarter said they were not provided education on health disparities, more than a third were not required to study medical ethics, and more than half were not offered courses in bioterrorism or disaster preparedness. Seventeen percent were satisfied with the curricula. Medical schools find it a challenge to teach the traditional medical curriculum while also incorporating new topics, but it is absolutely necessary that medical schools recognize this challenge and strive to develop physicians who can provide care in the modern health care environment. *(AHA NewsNow)*

### **7. Survey Finds Growing Shortage of Pharmacy Managers**

Eight of 10 pharmacy directors perceive a shortage of pharmacy managers and experienced frontline pharmacists in 2005, though the annual vacancy rate for pharmacists has remained steady at 6.2 percent and is down from the 8.9 percent peak in 2000. It is encouraging that the recruitment and retention of clinical coordinators, clinical specialists, entry-level frontline pharmacists, and both experienced and entry-level pharmacy technicians in our nation's hospitals have become fairly stable. However, there is a growing need for additional experienced pharmacy managers and frontline pharmacists. These findings are based on the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists latest annual survey of more than 2,500 hospitals and health system pharmacy directors.

### **8. Coalition Proposes Changes to Speed Nurse Immigration**

The American Hospital Association and 10 other organizations recently requested a meeting with the State and Homeland Security departments to discuss changes to their administrative policies and processes regarding immigration of health care workers to help health care organizations address a chronic shortage of health care professionals. Congress is debating long-term immigration reform but the nurse shortage requires immediate action and any legislative provisions could take years to implement.

The coalition of health care providers, nurse leaders, nurse staffing and educational concerns asked the departments to take immediate administrative steps to speed the flow of highly qualified foreign nurses. It currently takes as long as two years for a foreign nurse to be qualified to work in the U.S. and administrative changes alone could reduce the time to less than six months.

## 9. Remaking American Medicine

Several national organizations, including the American Nurses Association, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Hospital Association and the American Heart Association, are coming together to create a new campaign focused on improving and raising the standards of health care in America. A four-part primetime series, *Remaking American Medicine...Health Care for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, will tell the stories of individuals and institutions struggling to address the problems plaguing the health care system and will be covered in April 2006 by PBS. A Web site created for the campaign, [www.RAMcampaign.org](http://www.RAMcampaign.org), includes a searchable database, a "Connect with Others" section with descriptions and contact information for local and regional coalitions and their outreach activities, including town hall meetings and local programming initiatives in support of the series.

## 10. Job of the Month

The surgeon's assistant functions under the supervision of a licensed physician to assist during surgery as well as providing pre- and post-operative care to patients.

The typical duties include performing histories and physicals, and requesting necessary test and exams. The surgeon's assistant also may order pre-operative medication, and functions as a first or second assistant during surgery.

A surgeon's assistant generally is required to have four years of health care experience before entering a surgical assistant program. The typical program is 25 months long.

The average starting salary is in the low \$30,000s per year with the growth expected to remain healthy, particularly in rural areas where there may be shortages of physicians. This information is provided by a publication offered by the Akron Regional Hospital Association that offers an overview and examples of the many types of jobs available in the field of health care. It describes careers for those interested in working closely with patients and others, and also for those drawn to technology or advanced support services. To see the publication visit the *OHA Workforce Forum* at [www.ohanet.org/workforce/toolkit.htm](http://www.ohanet.org/workforce/toolkit.htm).

## OHA Workforce Update

is a service of the Ohio Hospital Association  
155 E. Broad St., FL 15, Columbus, OH 43215-3620  
614-221-7614, 614-221-4771 (fax)

For more information contact  
Susan Zabo [susanz@ohanet.org](mailto:susanz@ohanet.org)

or

Jean Scholz [jeans@ohanet.org](mailto:jeans@ohanet.org)

Visit us on the Web at: <http://www.ohanet.org/workforce/>