

» In A Flash

Nursing workforce is growing, but are nurses satisfied with their careers?

Nearly one-third of RNs recently surveyed by AMN Healthcare say they will not be working in their current job a year from now; nearly half say they plan to alter their career path in the next one to three years in a way that would either take them out of the nursing field entirely or reduce their contribution to direct patient care by working fewer hours or choosing a less demanding role; and nearly half say their job is affecting their health.

Meanwhile, the total number of RNs in the United States grew to a new high of 3.1 million between 2004 and 2008, according to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), part of the Department of Health and Human Services. This increase of more than 5 percent also reflects growing diversity in the backgrounds of nurses.

AMN Healthcare, a staffing agency headquartered in San Diego, conducted its survey during an economic recession and in the course of an ongoing national debate over healthcare reform. The survey found that:

- 29 percent of nurses plan to take steps in the next one to three years that would reduce their role or take them out of nursing altogether.
- 15 percent say they will make a change in their career path, such as becoming a travel nurse or nurse practitioner.
- 55 percent believe that the quality of care nurses provide today has declined compared with the quality of care provided five years ago.
- 59 percent would still select nursing as a career if they

had it to do it all over.

- 64 percent would recommend nursing as a career to young people.

HRSA's survey found that:

- 50 percent of RNs had achieved a baccalaureate or higher degree in nursing or a nursing-related field in 2008, compared with 27.5 percent in 1980.
- The number of RNs with master's or doctorate degrees rose to 404,163 in 2008, an increase of 46.9 percent from 2004 and up from 85,860 in 1980.
- The average age of all RNs increased to 47.0 years in 2008 from 46.8 in 2004; this represents a relative stabilization after many years of continuing large increases in average age.
- Nearly 45 percent of RNs were 50 or older in 2008, an increase from 33 percent in 2000 and 25 percent in 1980.
- Average annual earnings for RNs in 2008 were \$66,973. RNs' salaries rose nearly 15.9 percent since 2004, slightly outpacing inflation.
- An estimated 444,668 RNs received their first U.S. license between 2004 and 2008.

AMN Healthcare's 2010 Survey of Registered Nurses: Job Satisfaction and Career Plans collected data from 1,399 respondents. HRSA publishes the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses every four years, and the 2008 survey went to more than 55,000 nurses with active RN licenses, with representation from every state and Washington, D.C.

Gear & Gadgets

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