

ABSTRACT TITLE: Where Are They Now? A retrospective analysis of churn among registered nurses and nurse practitioners in Oregon

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PROBLEM STATEMENT: Recent estimates put the number of registered nurses (RNs) (including those in advanced practice) working in the state at nearly 41,800. As the largest of the health professions, the downstream effects of churn within the nursing profession undoubtedly reverberate throughout all of health care.

BACKGROUND/EVIDENCE: Labor market churn is defined as the movement of workers from one job to another. Higher levels of churn are generally seen as an indicator of ample employment opportunity but churn also comes at a cost. In the nurse workforce, churn may lead to decreased morale among remaining staff, disrupt continuity of care, and have a negative impact on patient satisfaction and patient safety.

METHOD/STRATEGY: Data collected as part of the nurse licensing process administered by the Oregon State Board of Nursing were used to look at a cohort of RNs and a cohort of nurse practitioners (NPs) practicing in Oregon as of 12/31/2011 to assess their current status as of 12/31/2014.

RESULTS: Among RNs working in Oregon in 2011, 76% were still working in 2014. The percentage was slightly higher (79%) for NPs. There were notable differences in the percentages of RNs and NPs who were no longer practicing in Oregon when stratified by age, year of licensure, position, practice setting, and geographic region. For example, 44% of RNs licensed in 2010 or 2011 were no longer practicing in Oregon 3 years later. Sixty-three percent of RNs working as nurse managers/supervisors were no longer in those positions 3 years later. NPs in family practice and emergency/urgent care experienced more churn than counterparts in other practice areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS/LESSONS LEARNED: Looking at a cohort of nursing licensees over time reveals levels of churn not detected by examining the entire workforce in its entirety. Data discovered may encourage employers, employees, and other stakeholders to enter into discussions about where churn is an indicator of innovation and positive growth and where it can and should be mitigated.