

To Solve The Nursing Shortage, Employers And Educators Must Partner

(NAPSA)—By 2020, an estimated 1 million registered nurse jobs in the U.S. health care system will go unfilled—but that doesn't have to happen. To care for a growing population of older, sicker patients, nursing schools, health care employers and technology innovators must work together to close this gap.

Apollo Research Institute convened a panel of nursing educators, health care executives and other nursing thought leaders to propose solutions to the shortage and other industry challenges. Key findings are published in the Apollo Research Institute report "Critical Conditions: Preparing the 21st-Century Nursing Workforce." The report addresses ways to improve nurse recruitment, education and career advancement to anticipate tomorrow's health care needs.

Panelists identified the lack of nursing faculty as a major factor in the shortage. Prospective students are being wait listed at nursing schools and existing nurses are unable to continue their education. Health care organizations have assisted by providing practicing nurses as part-time faculty or mentors.

The panel also discussed an Institute of Medicine report that recommended higher levels of education for registered nurses. For nurses to achieve the recommended academic credentials, employers and higher education providers must collaborate to improve program access. The nursing experts suggested flexible scheduling for students who work or are raising a family, professional development tracks for working nurses, and community college partnerships



The rising population of older Americans will make the nursing shortage even more acute.

for associate's-to-bachelor's program transitions.

Technology will continue to drive innovations in nursing practice and education, panelists noted, citing electronic health records and simulation technology. But they also agreed that nursing technology should never replace the personal touch and that it must be deployed more efficiently. Panelists also predicted greater reliance on outpatient services and rising numbers of geriatric cancer patients as the U.S. population ages.

These and other shifts will require nurses to get involved in creating solutions. "As the front line of patient care, nurses need to share their insights with policymakers, educators and employers so that the industry can benefit from their clinical expertise and understanding of patients' social and emotional needs," says Dr. Tracey Wilen-Daugenti, vice president and managing director of Apollo Research Institute and the panel's moderator.

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