

# Nursing Health Services Research Unit

a collaborative project of  
the University of Toronto  
Faculty of Nursing and  
McMaster University  
School of Nursing

Our mission is to develop,  
conduct and disseminate  
research that focuses on:

- design
  - management
  - utilization
  - outcomes
  - provision
- ...of nursing.

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*Nursing Health Services Research Unit  
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## *Fact Sheet: Mobility of Nurses Within Canada*

### Issues in Assessing Mobility

Provincial/territorial nursing regulatory bodies collect data from annual registration forms submitted by Registered Nurses (RNs), Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs). Statistical data for mobility is compiled by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI).

Mobility indicators are:

- Place of graduation compared with current registration (CIHI)
- Requests for registration verification of credentials (Provincial/territory nursing regulatory bodies)
- Actual registration (Canadian Nurses Association with regulatory bodies)

The limitations of this data are:

- Lack of appropriate and comparable statistics
  - No national, lifetime unique identifier for each licensed nurse
  - No national, standardized data collection tool
  - Database for LPNs & RPNs only available since 2002
- The following categories of nurses cannot be accounted for:
  - Living abroad
  - Migration outside home province followed by return home
  - Not registered
  - Failure to state status at registration
  - Not working in nursing
  - Maintaining associate/non-practicing status
  - Educated outside home province/territory followed by return home for employment

### Mobility Trends for Registered Nurses (RNs)

- An east to west trend in inter-provincial migration patterns for RNs is similar to those of other professions.
- RNs educated in Ontario migrate to the territories, British Columbia (BC), Alberta & Quebec.
- RNs from Newfoundland & Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island (PEI) and a small number from Quebec & BC migrate to Ontario.
- RNs educated in the four provinces of Western Canada & Quebec tend to remain in these regions.
- RNs educated in the Atlantic Provinces tend to remain there; however, emigration to Ontario, Alberta and BC does occur.
- In 2003, 80% of the Canadian RN workforce was comprised of retained graduates, with Quebec (95.7%), Newfoundland & Labrador (93%) and New Brunswick (85.9%) having the highest percentage of retained graduates in their workforces.
- BC (28.9%), PEI (28.9%) and Alberta (27.3%) workforces had the highest percentage of inter-provincial graduates in 2003, with the exception of the territories and Nunavut.
- Due to a small territory-educated RN workforce, the Yukon Territories (93.1%), Northwest Territories (78%) & Nunavut (85.7%) workforces were comprised of inter-provincial graduates in 2003.

### **Mobility Trends for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs; Registered Practical Nurses in Ontario)**

- Similar to the RN workforce, inter-provincial migration patterns for LPNs followed an east to west trend.
- PEI, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta have a relative balance of out- and in-migration.
- BC has a significantly higher rate of in-migration than out-migration.
- Manitoba experiences more out-migration than in-migration.
- In 2003, Manitoba (93.3%), Ontario (93.2%), PEI (92.4%), Nova Scotia (91.6%) & New Brunswick (91.2%) reported the highest percentages of retained graduates in their workforces.
- Yukon Territory (36.7%) and Northwest Territories (83.7%) had the highest rates of inter-provincial graduates in their workforces in 2003. Current data on inter-jurisdictional movement in Nunavut is unavailable.

### **Mobility Trends for Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs)**

- RPNs are educated and regulated in the four Western provinces – Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta & BC. Regulatory bodies in these provinces track the mobility of RPNs and report in- and out-migration among all four provinces.
- In 2003, Alberta (29.9%) and BC (15.6%) workforces included the highest percentages of inter-provincial graduates.
- Manitoba (95.1%) and Saskatchewan (90.6%) workforces reported the highest percentages of retained graduates in 2003.
- Currently, Saskatchewan has no graduating RPNs as they are redesigning their educational programme (B. Allen, personal communication, 2 May, 2005). Manitoba does not license graduates of Saskatchewan's previous RPN program (Psychiatric Nursing Education, 2000).

### **Major Motivations for Nurse Mobility**

- Availability of jobs
- Greater income & benefits
- Full-time employment
- Family reasons
- Personal growth & development

### **Recommendations**

- 1) Collect accurate information, coordinated at a national level, on all three regulated professions. A priority for policy makers must be to decide what data should be collected and who should collect it.
- 2) Adopt a unique identifier for each nurse to facilitate:
  - prevention of double- or under-counting
  - accurate tracking of nurses inter-jurisdictionally, in and out of nursing and through changes in educational and practice status throughout their careers
  - provision of accurate information for the construction of a database
- 3) Conduct further research to identify factors that influence mobility, attract nurses to specific jurisdictions and affect recruitment & retention during global shortages.
- 4) Promote known motivating factors, such as full-time employment, benefits, and job security.

Excerpted from: Baumann, A., Blythe, J., Kolotylo, C., & Underwood, J. (2004). *Building the Future: An integrated strategy for nursing human resources in Canada, Mobility of Nurses in Canada*. Ottawa, Canada: The Nursing Sector Study Corporation.

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