Health Workforce Recruitment and Retention in New York City: What Are the Issues and Strategies?

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METHODS

- A mixed-methods approach was used
- Key informant interviews
- Secondary data analysis
- Employer demand survey (sent to all NYC hospitals, nursing homes, and home health care agencies)
- Study research questions included:
  - What health occupations are the most difficult to recruit for and why?
  - What health occupations are the most difficult to retain and why?
  - Do recruitment and retention difficulties vary by provider type?
  - What strategies are health care providers using to recruit and retain needed workers?
  - What are recent trends in the deployment of and demand for health care workers in NYC?
  - What impacts has the COVID-19 pandemic had on the health professions educational pipeline, particularly registered nursing?

RESULTS

Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) Were 2 of the Most Difficult Occupations to Recruit and Retain Other recruitment and retention difficulties included:
- Clinical laboratory technicians and technologists (hospitals)
- Social workers, medical assistants, and clerical staff (hospitals, home health care agencies, ambulatory care providers)
- Home health aids (long-term care providers, home health care agencies)

Critical Factors Contributed to Recruitment Difficulties
- Demand for workers outstripped supply
- Noncompetitive salaries
- Younger applicants were much more concerned with work-life balance
- New hires often stayed long enough to obtain the necessary experience to get a higher paying job, often in a different setting

Retention of Health Care Workers Worsened During and After the Pandemic

Factors included:
- Stressful working conditions
- Turnovers increased
- Other factors that contributed to increased attrition included family commitments (childcare or eldercare) and transportation issues

Considerable Job Growth is Projected for Many Health Care Occupations in NYC, Including Some That Are Currently in Short Supply Between 2018 and 2028:
- Home health aide positions are projected to have more than 37,000 annual openings
- Personal care aide positions are projected to have nearly 32,000 annual openings

FIGURE 1. Employment Projections for NYC for Selected Occupations, 2018–2028

- Home Health Aides 117,810 120,190 2,380 2.00% 21,280
- Personal Care Aides 136,750 210,500 73,750 53.70% 23,955
- Registered Nurses 36,370 51,720 15,350 42.10% 6,349
- Nursing Assistants 80,790 62,570 18,220 22.40% 5,662
- Home Health Aides 117,810 120,190 2,380 2.00% 21,280
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DISCUSSION

- Health worker shortages were not a new phenomenon
- COVID-19 pandemic dramatically increased the number and magnitude of occupations in short supply
- Other employment sectors were competing with health care for the same workers
- Strong competition for workers in general and in health care settings specifically
- Turnover increased
- Many workers experienced stressful working conditions and left their jobs, including many older workers who retired
- Some workers left their jobs due to concerns about the potential impact of COVID-19 on themselves and their families
- Other workers found better paying jobs both in and out of health care
- Other factors that contributed to increased attrition included family commitments (childcare or eldercare) and transportation issues

Employers observed a generational shift in how younger employees view their jobs
- These workers prioritize work-life balance in order to avoid burnout and maintain better balance between their work and personal lives

IMPLICATIONS

- A variety of strategies are needed to recruit and retain health care workers
- Without them, the current workforce shortages will persist and increase

A variety of strategies need to be used to recruit and retain health care workers—otherwise current workforce shortages will persist and increase.