

Book: *RX for the Nursing Shortage: A Guidebook*

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Book Review:

Schaffner and Ludwig-Beymer grabs the readers' attention with an opening and powerful statement; "staff members sometimes say, 'I am just a nurse,' as if a nurse lacks value; the profession has a self-esteem crisis" (p. xiii). The authors define the nursing shortage as a problem stressing the United States and world healthcare. Readers are taken through well thought-out and researched breakouts of issues surrounding the nursing shortage.

Schaffner and Ludwig-Beymer provide clear and well-written background information explaining the present day nursing shortage, outlining trends, introducing legislation created to alleviate the nursing issues, and an interesting overview foreign nursing staffing legislation. The authors provided readers with a valuable source of additional information on nursing trends, the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses. The survey, conducted every four years since 1980, provides interesting trends on the nursing career field. The nursing career field increased by over 1 million from 1980 to 2000, but 1996 and 2000 marked the slowest growth. Nursing is the largest occupation in the United States with over 2.5 million licensed registered nurses; and men and minorities are the fastest growing groups entering the field. Geographically, Southern and Midwestern states show more predominant nursing shortages. One interesting point addressed by the authors is nursing career field is one of the least mobile of all occupations, where nurses generally work in the same geographical area where they attended nursing school.

With the problems identified, the authors aggressively illustrate advisements focused on resolving the need for nurses; recruitment and retention. The authors provide multiple alternatives, some time tested options and other more progressive methods designed as tools for healthcare systems. The authors continuously emphasize the necessity to 'set your organization apart from the competition' through strategic planning and successful marketing. An interesting twist to the book was the application of strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis for the recruitment of nursing staff. Schaffner and Ludwig-Beymer provide readers with an example of a SWOT analysis performed on Faith General Hospital demonstrating the need to begin the process of recruiting and retention by first looking at the facility. The authors addressed the importance of developing short and long term strategic plans, reiterating the importance of not confusing or setting goals incorrectly. For recruitment and retention the authors point out the need for balance in fiscal and human resources, claiming focusing improperly on one will directly impact the other.

Schaffner and Ludwig-Beymer conclude the recruitment and retention sections culminating each chapter with a 'toolbox' listing '100 Ways to Recruit/Retain RNs.' Schaffner and Ludwig-Beymer address the need for managements commitment and involvement as critical steps in the problem and solution, stating "...because the right management team is necessary to create an exceptional work environment" (p. 203). The checklists are applicable to other arenas of the health care system where staffing issues are of a concern. The checklists provide readers suggestions as the directly relate to major topics such as compensation, staffing, and leadership. The checklist is not designed to provide the reader with simple solutions to staffing problems but

upon the mind of the reader to explore options available and how they may work in individual organizations.

Retention in the nursing field is considered by the authors as one of the leading causes in the nursing career field. The authors go into great detail discussing many of the issues surrounding retention problems and provide the reader with common workplace factors and provide questions that the reader can expand upon while conducting a climate survey. Lacking and very important to many organization is career growth and mentoring programs, the authors spend a chapter outlining not only the importance of these two programs but make suggestion on techniques; stressing the importance of demonstrating both programs for newly recruited nursing staffs.

The authors conclude by discussing the importance of programs designed to create pride in the nursing staff and facility, such as the "Magnet Status" and how nursing management can use this and other programs to recruit and retain staff. The work environment is where nurses begin their care of others and should also be a place where nurses' needs are met as well.