



The Baby Boomer Work Force: An Alternative Role for the Pediatric Staff Nurse

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BACKGROUND:

- Critical knowledge is at risk for being lost because of the aging baby boomer work force.
- "...Given the enormous changes boomers brought to the nursing labor market in the 1970 through their persistent labor participation, it is not inconceivable that this group may force new patterns at the end of their careers." (Minnich, 2001).
- Despite the current easing of the nursing shortage due to the recession, the U.S. nursing shortage is projected to grow to 260,000 RN's by 2025. A shortage of this magnitude would be twice as large as any nursing shortage experienced in this country since the mid-1960's (Buerhaus, Staiger & Auerbach, 2009).

FACTS:

- In 2008, the Average age of a nurse was 47 years and is rising. As a result the largest cohort of nurses is currently between 50-69 years of age.
- Approximately 50% of the RN workforce will reach retirement age in the next 10 years.
- Average age of new RN grad is 31years.
- 2008 national census: 77 million American boomers compared with 46 million Generation X'ers, compile the smallest pool of entry level workers since the 1930's.

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop an alternative role for the baby boomer staff nurse
- Retention of experienced nursing staff
- Preservation of critical and historical nursing knowledge

Development of innovative and mentoring liaison roles

METHOD:

1. Multidisciplinary approaches to problem solving and resource identification based on the level of the nurses expertise, knowledge, networking & communication skills
2. Role enhancement and support of bedside nurses by:
 - reinforcing teaching,
 - answering questions
 - performing tasks that allow the bedside nurse more time with their other patients



•ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Facilitates smooth transitions and brokers care.
- Real time reporting of issues to multi-disciplinary team
- Development of data collection tools.
- Problem solving solutions to identified issues
- Identification of trends
- Provides method for feedback to interdisciplinary staff
- Identifies resources to improve satisfaction
- Increase in nurse and patient/family satisfaction

The issue of an aging workforce is not specific to nursing but is experienced nationally and internationally throughout industry. According to David DeLong author of the book, *Lost knowledge: Confronting the threat of an aging workforce*, the impact that the loss of specific knowledge may vanish from organizations is significant. DeLong made his points by drawing on the example of the early retirement of NASA engineers, as a result NASA lost the knowledge of how to land on the moon.