The Real Cost of Nursing Turnover

Just how much does nursing turnover really cost your facility?

A study conducted by the Journal of Nursing Administration revealed that the average cost to replace a nurse is roughly $82,000. According to Karlene Kerfoot, R.N. from HHNMag.com, that cost includes things like travel or labor costs, per diems, recruiting, advertising, orientation, training and lower production from an overly stressed nurse staff.

Kerfoot’s suggestions to resolve the nursing shortage are to:

- reduce overtime
- practice shared governance programs
- implement data-driven staffing
- develop quality of life initiatives

For more detail on these suggestions, read her article in its entirety here.

While her solutions are practical, the reality is that hospitals and healthcare facilities alike need access to more nurses, right now. A shortage of nurses creates dangerous staffing ratios that are proven to put patients at risk.

For example, hospitals that staff 1:8 nurse-to-patient ratios experience five additional deaths per 1,000 patients than a 1:4 nurse-to-patient ratio (Journal of the American Medical Association, 2002). The odds of patient death climbs by 7 percent for each additional patient the nurse must
take on at one time (Journal of the American Medical Association, 2002). Furthermore, patients experience better outcomes when staffing levels meet those established in California, including more lives saved, shorter hospital stays and general improvement in quality care (Health Services Research, 2010).

**But what can be done right now?**

There are job listings for nurses in virtually every hospital, but where are hospitals getting the nurses to fill them? According to a recent USA Today article, travel nursing demand has reached a 20-year high. But while effective, travel nursing is a pricey, short-term solution.

International healthcare staffing is rapidly growing in popularity, both in the United States and overseas. Consider our friends in Europe, who are hiring foreign-trained nurses at a rapid pace. According to Recruiter, three-quarters of the nurses recruited by a National Health Service (NHS) Trust came from overseas.

Unfortunately, the biggest detriment to using international staffing is misinformation. But the facts and hard data seldom agree. The reality is, nurses from abroad can be a viable option to supplement your current hospital workforce.