

Employment Opportunities for Graduate Nurses From 4 Vilnius Hospitals

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Key words: nurse; employment opportunities; nursing studies.

Summary. *Objective.* This study aimed at assessing employment opportunities for graduate nurses from 4 hospitals in Vilnius.

Materials and Methods. Participants of the study included 136 working nurses with either a university or college degree in nursing. The survey took place from January to April of 2011 in 4 hospitals in Vilnius. The head nurses distributed the questionnaires for staff nurses and later on selected for transferring to the researcher; 200 questionnaires were distributed, and 136 nurses filled out these questionnaires (response rate, 68%).

Results. Almost half (42.6%) of all the respondents looked for the employment opportunities using their personal contacts; 41.2% of the respondents visited the human resources divisions of medical institutions. One-third of the respondents (30.1%) indicated that they always wanted to work here; other respondents (19.1% for each option) pointed out that they either could not get employed where they preferred or there was no possibility of employment in other places. The majority (86.1%) of the nurses had a positive attitude toward employment opportunities abroad. Better working conditions (79%) and salary (14%) were indicated by the nurses as the most frequent reasons for willing to leave for work in a foreign country. One-third (31%) of the respondents stated that they were satisfied with their job.

Conclusions. The employment opportunities for Lithuanian nurses from 4 Vilnius hospitals are mostly based on personal initiative and inclusion of personal contacts; the professional wishes of young nurses seeking the job are not always realized in their first employment. There are positive attitudes toward work abroad even if some reasons for staying to work in the country are present.

Introduction

In Lithuania, future nurses may choose whether they would like to study in a university or a college. It is possible to obtain a university bachelor's and master's degree in nursing after graduation from the Faculty of Medicine, Vilnius University; the Faculty of Nursing, the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences; and the Faculty of Health Sciences, Klaipėda University. A professional bachelor's degree in nursing may also be acquired in 6 colleges (Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Panevėžys, and Utena) (1).

In Lithuania, the preparation of professional nurses follows the recommendations of international organizations of nursing professionals and the directive of the European Union. The Law on Nursing and related legislation have been adopted, and the nurse licensing system is under implementation (2).

Providing health care services and taking part in the reform of the health care system, contemporary nursing practice requires professionals to have new knowledge that enables them to act independently and to be responsible for their decisions and their implementation (3). Institutions of higher education are entrusted with a crucial task, namely to prepare

health care professionals who are competent, fully educated, and meet the European Union requirements for the training of nurses.

After graduating from universities and colleges, nursing professionals are ready to apply the principles of contemporary nursing philosophy in practice: a holistic approach to a patient and his or her health and respect for human dignity and individuality. Graduates apply the knowledge acquired during their course of study in practical work; they are capable of supporting and developing health of both individual patients and the society (4).

When thinking about their employment opportunities in the field of nursing, graduates are mostly guided by their personal attitudes and consider their chances and willingness to start practice in one or another area of the health care system (5).

Recognizing the vital role played by nursing personnel in the protection and improvement of health and welfare of the population and acknowledging that the public sector as an employer of nursing personnel should play an active role in the improvement of conditions of employment and work of nursing personnel, the General Conference of the Interna-

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tional Labour Organization has signed the Convention Concerning Employment and Conditions of Work and Life of Nursing Personnel. This convention applies to all nursing personnel irrespective of their workplace and provides that conditions of employment and work should be determined through negotiations between the relevant employer's and worker's organizations (6).

An analysis of the supply of and demand for nurses shows that in many districts of Lithuania, there is a sufficient demand for nurses, and the projected demand for general practice nurses in the coming years is expected to be among the highest (7).

The aim of this study was to assess employment opportunities for graduate nurses from 4 hospitals in Vilnius.

Participants of the study included 136 working nurses with either a university or college degree in nursing.

Methods

The survey of the nurses was carried out by means of an anonymous questionnaire prepared by the researchers in advance and including questions related to nurses' gender, age, education, workplace, methods of job search, employment in Lithuania and abroad, difficulties that are faced by nurses while looking for a job, and nurses' opinion about working abroad.

The survey took place from January to April of 2011 in 4 hospitals in Vilnius. In total, 200 questionnaires were distributed, and 136 nurses filled out these questionnaires (response rate, 68%). The researchers asked the head nurses in the units to distribute the questionnaires to their staff nurses asking to fill them out. All the nurses who agreed to do that participated in the study. The participants completed the questionnaires on their own. An analysis of the data was performed using the SPSS for Windows 13.0 statistical package and Excel 2003. Percentages, arithmetic mean, and sample standard deviation (SD) were calculated.

Results

The participants of the study included 136 nurses who completed university (52.9%) and nonuniversity (47.1%) higher education studies from 2000 to 2011. The age of the nurses varied from 23 to 54 years (mean age, 30.8 years; SD, 8.18). The majority (94.9%) of all the respondents were women (Table 1).

Employment Opportunities for Nurses. The participating nurses were requested to explain their methods of job search. The results showed that 42.6% of all the respondents looked for the job asking their colleagues, relatives, and others for the possibilities. Almost half (41.2%) of the respondents visited hu-

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents According to Their Education and Gender

Indicator		n	%
Education	University	72	52.9
	College	64	47.1
Gender	Female	129	94.9
	Male	7	5.1

Table 2. Distribution of Nurses According to the Methods of Job Search, Problems with Employment, and Duration of Job Search

Criterion	All Respondents n=136	
	n	%
Method of job search		
Newspaper, Internet advertisements	5	3.7
Applied by sending a CV	9	6.6
Offered by acquaintances	58	42.6
Applied to human resources divisions of medical institutions	56	41.2
Other	8	5.9
Had difficulty finding a job	49	36.0
Duration of job search		
1 month	80	58.8
2-3 months	36	26.5
More than 3 months	20	14.7

man resources divisions of medical institutions on their own initiative.

While examining employment opportunities, the nurses were asked whether they had any difficulty finding a job. According to the findings of this study, one-third (36%) of the nurses had difficulty finding a job, i.e., it took long time, and there were many applications with negative responses.

Duration of Job Search. The study showed that more than half of the respondents (58.8%) were employed within a month after graduation (Table 2).

The nurses were asked what factors determined the choice of the workplace they were currently working in. According to the data shown in Table 3, one-third (30.1%) of the respondents said that they always wanted to work here, 19.1% of the respondents (for each option) indicated that they could not get employed where they preferred or there was no possibility of employment in other places, 14% of the respondents made their choice on the grounds of payment conditions choosing the department with some extra payment due to intensity (e.g., intensive care, mental health, etc.), and 17.7% of the respondents specified good recommendations.

Nurses' Attitudes Toward Employment Opportunities Abroad. The study was aimed at establishing nurses' attitudes toward employment opportunities abroad. The results of the study showed that the majority (86.1%) of the nurses had a positive attitude toward employment opportunities abroad.

Table 3. Nurses' Criteria for Choosing Workplace and Their Attitudes Toward Working Abroad

Criterion	All Respondents n=136	
	n	%
Criterion for choosing workplace		
Always wanted to work here	41	30.1
Could not get employed where preferred	26	19.1
There was no possibility of employment in other places	26	19.1
Because of salary	19	14.0
Because of good recommendations and other reasons	24	17.7
Opportunity to work abroad		
Has a positive attitude	116	86.1
Willing to leave for working abroad	72	52.9
Unwilling to leave for working abroad	64	47.1
Reason for willing to leave for working abroad		
Better working conditions	57	79.2
Higher salary	10	13.9
Better career opportunities	5	6.9

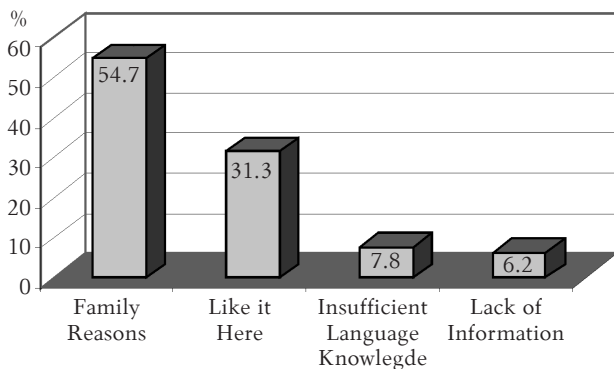


Fig. Nurses' reasons to prefer the work in home country

Better working conditions (79.2%) and salary (13.9%) were pointed out by the nurses as the most frequent reasons for willing to leave for work in a foreign country (Table 3).

Nurses' Reasons to Prefer the Work in Home Country. The most common reason among nurses for not going to work abroad was their inability to leave the family behind (55%). One-third (31%) of the respondents stated that they were satisfied with their job and did not want to change anything (Fig.).

Discussion

Every individual may freely choose a job and has a right to have proper, safe, and healthy conditions at work and to receive fair payment for work and social security in the event of unemployment (8).

It is important to take into account individual interests and preferences when choosing a profession. Preferences are expressed through positive inner motivation toward activities. The psychological basis of preferences consists of the individual's con-

stant needs for activities, i.e., it is such a state when an individual is no longer interested in the result, but in the very process of activities, the object of work (9).

In the process of choosing or changing a profession, it is often hard to make a decision as before starting to work, there is not enough information about the conditions of employment, colleagues, particular aspects of work, and other factors that are significant for every individual (10). Usually, information about a future workplace is gathered from a variety of sources: publications in mass media, acquaintances and close friends who work in these institutions, etc. Our study showed that the majority of the nurses were looking for a job through their acquaintances and applied to human resources divisions of medical institutions. The smallest part of all the respondents who participated in the survey were looking for a job through advertisements on the Internet and in newspapers, or by sending their resumé (*curriculum vitae*) to health care institutions.

According to the data of the World Health Organization, the number of nurses in Lithuania decreased by 21.9% within one decade (from 1996 to 2006) (11). Following a request of the Ministry of Health, in 2010 and 2011, the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences carried out a study "Analysis of the Numbers of Medical Staff, Demand, and Pilot 'Day Photograph' of Workload," which demonstrated that there was no shortage of nurses in Lithuania due to previous numerous admissions to nursing studies, reduction in hospital beds in health care institutions from 2001 to 2009, and specific features of medical services in the community (12).

According to the forecast of employment opportunities in Vilnius district in 2011 provided by Vilnius Territorial Labour Exchange, where employment opportunities are divided into good, limited, and minimal, common practice nurses are referred to as a group of jobseekers with limited employment opportunities (13). According to the results of our study, one-third of all the respondents had difficulty finding a job. More than half of the respondents were employed within a month after graduation, while every sixth respondent searched for a job for 3 months or longer.

The choice of a job is one of the most topical issues as the growth of personal and societal welfare depends on the solution of this problem. The problem of choosing a profession and a job is also a question of self-expression and self-realization, self-establishment in a specific area of activities, and spiritual harmony. Only having chosen a job that corresponds to his or her intellectual and physical talents and preferences, an individual will find inner satisfaction at work, will enjoy his or her job, will work better, and will improve it (14, 15).

The results of our study indicated that one-third of the respondents chose a workplace where they always wished to work. Therefore, it is possible to assume that these nurses realized their dreams and reached their goal. However, every fifth nurse who took part in the study noted that they could not get employed where they preferred and that there was no possibility of employment in other places. These results indicate that these nurses will be less internally satisfied with their job or some additional motivating environment has to be created for them in their workplace. There is a need for more extensive research on this matter in order to establish a connection between these factors (the choice of a workplace and the inner job satisfaction).

The shortage of nursing personnel has become a worldwide problem. In countries of the European Union, the shortage of nurses is primarily felt in relation to their age, i.e., more than 40% of working nurses are older than 40 years. According to surveys carried out in Europe, younger nursing professionals are changing responsible, exhausting, and risky nursing positions for easier and safer jobs, are willing to work regular hours and have rest at nights, on weekends, and public holidays, and the need to get higher payment motivates them to change a workplace and even a profession (16).

The most common reasons for the shortage of nurses include low salary, inflexible working hours (17), heavy workload, and limited career opportunities (18). Nurses who are satisfied with their job are more frequently proud about their profession and the institution where they work than nurses who are dissatisfied with their job. In addition, nurses who are satisfied with their job are likely to change their workplace less frequently (19).

Lithuanian nurses are very welcome for work in the Scandinavian countries, Denmark, England, Ireland, and Germany, and the number of such countries increases. There are numerous advertisements of job offers for nurses, which usually offer work in a nursing home or to take care of one person in

their own home. There are also offers for work in other health care institutions. There is a description of tasks, workload, whether there is board and lodgings, whether it is free or paid, and the amount of payment. The requirements are also listed: it is necessary to speak the language of a country where a nurse is going and to have a valid license of general practice nursing and working experience in nursing (20).

The results of this study showed that the majority of all the respondents thought positively about working abroad as a nurse, and half of them were willing to leave for working abroad. Better working conditions and higher salary were pointed out by the nurses as the most frequent reasons for willing to leave for work in a foreign country. The remaining part of the nurses (47.1%) who were unwilling (or unable) to leave for working abroad noted that half of them could not leave their family behind, and one-third was satisfied with the current job and did not want to change anything. In the future, it is planned to carry out more extensive research on how various factors influence professional activities of nurses.

Conclusions

The employment opportunities for Lithuanian nurses from 4 Vilnius hospitals are mostly based on personal initiative and inclusion of personal contacts in the search although in many cases the time for getting the job is rather short.

The professional wishes of young nurses seeking the job are not always realized in their first employment; payment is an important aspect for choosing the employment place.

The positive attitudes of Lithuanian nurses from the study sample toward work abroad exist even if some reasons for staying to work in the country are present.

Statement of Conflict of Interest

The authors state no conflict of interest.

Studijas baigusiąs slaugytojų, dirbančių keturiose Vilniaus ligoninėse, galimybės įsidarbinti

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Raktažodžiai: slaugytojas, darbo galimybės, slaugos studijos.

Santrauka. Tyrimo tikslas – įvertinti baigusiąs studijas slaugytojų įsidarbinimo galimybes.

Medžiaga ir metodai. Tyrimui atlikti pasirinktas anketinis apklausos metodas. Tyrime dalyvavo 136 dirbantys slaugytojai, įgiję slaugos specialybę universitete arba kolegijoje. Apklausa vyko 2011 m. sausio–balandžio mėnesiais keturiose Vilniaus miesto ligoninėse. Išdalyta 200 anketų, kurias užpildė 136 slaugytojai (atsako dažnis – 68 proc.). Apklausos dalyviai anketas pildė savarankiškai. Duomenų analizė atlikta naudojant statistinės analizės „SPSS Windows 13.0“ ir „Excel 2003“ programas.

Rezultatai. 42,6 proc. tiriamųjų dėl darbo klausė pažįstamų; 41,2 proc. kreipėsi į gydymo įstaigų personalo skyrių, trečdalis visų slaugytojų (36,0 proc.) susidūrė su sunkumais įsidarbinant. Daugiau kaip pusė (58,8 proc.) tiriamųjų įsidarbino per mėnesį. Trečdalis (30,1 proc.) apklaustųjų nurodė, kad „visada norėjo čia dirbti“, po 19,1 proc. – „kur norėjau, nepavyko įsidarbinti“ ir „kitur nepavyko įsidarbinti“. Didžioji dauguma (86,1 proc.) slaugytojų darbo galimybes užsienyje vertina teigiamai: pusė visų tiriamųjų (52,9 proc.) norėtų išvykti dirbti į užsienį. Dažniausia priežastis, dėl kurios slaugytojai nurodo norintys vykti dirbti į užsienį, buvo: geresnės darbo sąlygos (79 proc.), darbo užmokestis (14 proc.). Dažniausia priežastis, dėl kurios slaugytojai nevyktų dirbti į užsienį, buvo ta, kad negali palikti šeimos (55 proc.). Trečdalis (31 proc.) nurodė, kad yra patenkinti savo darbu ir nenori nieko keisti.

Išvados. Daugiau kaip pusė tiriamųjų, baigę studijas, įsidarbino per mėnesį, trečdalis turėjo problemų dėl įsidarbinimo. Didžioji dauguma slaugytojų darbo galimybes užsienyje vertina teigiamai. Pusė visų tiriamųjų norėtų išvykti dirbti į užsienį. Dažniausios priežastys, dėl kurių slaugytojai nenori vykti dirbti į užsienį buvo: „dėl šeimos“ ir „yra patenkinti savo darbu ir nenori nieko keisti“.

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