



# WASHINGTON STATE NURSE ASSOCIATION

## POSITION PAPER ON RECRUITMENT OF FOREIGN EDUCATED NURSES

### ISSUE:

The growing nursing shortage and changes to U.S. trade agreements have given rise to increased efforts by U.S. health care employers to recruit, hire, and utilize foreign-educated registered nurses as a means of addressing the nursing shortage within their organizations.

### POSITION:

The Washington State Nurses Association (WSNA) supports the right of individual nurses to migrate, but condemns the practice of recruiting foreign-educated nurses to meet domestic staffing needs.

### WHEREBY:

- Employers recruit and utilize registered nurses from countries with current nursing shortages.
- Employers incur a substantial financial burden with the recruitment of foreign-educated nurses which include but are not limited to: relocation costs, attorney fees, immigration, visa and licensing expenses, and temporary housing *rather than* supporting nurse recruitment and retention practices within their own organizations and communities.
- Employers have the potential to exploit foreign-educated nurses by virtue of their dependence on immigration status and their willingness to work for less than prevailing area wages.
- Washington State citizens need to be assured the best possible quality nursing care in spite of the reliance on foreign-educated nurses as a long term solution to the continuing nursing shortage.
- Employers have not implemented specific retention and recruitment practices within their organizational culture as demonstrated in “Magnet” benchmarks for respecting and valuing nurses within their own communities and businesses (WSNA Cabinet on Economic and General Welfare, 2003).

## BACKGROUND:

Historically, nursing shortages have led employers to seek nurses from outside the borders of the United States. Congress has passed legislation that allows health care organizations the freedom to facilitate immigration of nurses from other countries. Each cycle of nursing shortage has brought an inconsistency of policy regarding the recruitment of foreign nurses. As a result, nursing organizations have taken an active role in developing policy for future nurse migration. “Nurse migration is often a symptom of more deep-seated problems in a country’s nursing labor markets relating to long-term relative under-investment in the profession and its career structure” (Buchan, 2001, pg. 203)

One of the significant considerations of foreign educated nurse recruitment is the concept of professional nursing practice. Nowhere is this model seen better than in organizations which have earned the coveted “Magnet” status. Magnet organizations exemplify the “gold standard” for nursing recruitment, retention and practice. To earn Magnet status, an organization must exhibit a professional nursing model which promotes both positive nursing and patient outcomes. Alternative patterns of nurse recruitment include: attracting non-traditional applicants (men and minorities), campaigning to attract nurses who have left nursing, and improving retention practices employed within health care organizations.

Recruitment of foreign-educated nurses heightens concerns regarding levels of nursing competence and English language proficiency. These concerns have been addressed by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools which provides guidelines to ensure competency and English proficiency. Safety and quality of health care standards cannot be compromised during nursing shortages by recruiting foreign educated nurses who may not meet the same criteria for professional nursing practice as the domestic nurse in the United States.

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) position statement (ICN, 2002) indicated the right of nurses to migrate, but it also acknowledged the adverse effects that migration might have on the *quality* of health care in donor countries. ICN condemns the practice of recruiting nurses from countries where problems related to adequate recruitment and retention of nurses have not been addressed (Kline, 2003, pg. 107). WSNA supports the belief expressed by ANA’s position on the recruitment of foreign educated nurses that the U.S. health care system has failed to provide a safe working environment in which nurses are able to provide quality nursing care. WSNA discourages the practice of recruiting nurses from countries wherein nursing shortages currently exist. WSNA is alarmed by the recruitment strategies for foreign educated nurses used by some health care organizations in Washington State. Recruitment costs per foreign nurse create a financial burden and strains the overall organizational climate due to unsound nurse retention policies and practices.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- WSNA will work in collaboration with the Washington Nursing Leadership Council, Washington Center for Nursing, the legislature, and other groups to develop comprehensive strategies to alleviate the need for employers to rely on importation of foreign-educated nurses.
- WSNA and its partners will work towards eliminating the growing use of foreign educated nurse recruitment as the primary means of addressing the nursing shortage in Washington State.

**Date: May, 2004**

**Review: May, 2009**

**Approved by the WSNA Board of Directors: August 6, 2004**

## References

Armstrong, K. (2003). *Washington State Nurses Association Cabinet on Economic and General Welfare*, Proposed Resolution, Foreign-educated Nurses.

Buchan, J. (2001). *Nurse Immigration and International Recruitment. Journal of Nursing Inquiry Volume 8*, 203-207

Flynn, L & Aiken, L. (2002). Does International nurse recruitment influence practice values in U.S. hospitals? *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 34(1), 67-73.

Gamble, D. (2002). Filipino nurse recruitment as a staffing strategy. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 32(4), 175-177.

Glaessel-Brown, E. (1998). Use of immigration policy to manage nursing shortages. *Image-the Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 30(4), 323-327.

Hancock, P. & Hopkins, S. (2002). International recruitment: quick fix or long-term investment? *Nursing Management*, 9(3), 15-19.

Kline, D. (2003). Push and pull factors in international nurse migration. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 35(2), 107-112.

Laschinger, S., Heather K., Almost, J., & Tuer-Hodes, D. (2003). Workplace empowerment and magnet hospital characteristics: making the link. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 33(7/8), 410-422.

Nurse retention, transfer and migration. (2000). *Nursing Standard*, 14(36), 33.

Peterson, C. A., 2002. Foreign nurses briefing paper. American Nurses Association Constituent Assembly.

Simpson, K. & Gamble, D. (2003). Is recruitment of foreign nurses a viable or ethical component of strategies to solve the current nursing shortage in U.S.? writing for the proposition. *Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing*, 28(1), 8-10.