

# **The Role of Nurse Leaders in the Integration of Internationally Educated Nurses into Canadian Hospitals**

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## **Objectives:**

Considerable literature exists on the immigration of internationally educated nurses (IENs) in other countries, but little information exists to guide nurse leadership, and in particular, nurse leaders role in the development and implementation of policies that promote the safe integration of IENs in Canada. The objective of this study was to gain a better understanding of the important role of nurse leaders in developing and implementing a key workforce change – specifically employment practices that promote the successful integration of IENs into healthcare work environments in Canada, within the context of quality patient care.

## **Methods:**

A comparative research design of a random sample of IENs, Canadian educated nurses (CENs) and nurse leaders from Canada was conducted. The survey gathered information on professional/demographic characteristics of IENs and CENs, and leadership initiatives implemented by nurse leaders including employment patterns, recruitment incentives utilized, workplace integration mechanisms employed, and long-term methods for retention of IENs proposed. The sample was comprised of 2,107 IENs, 1,172 CENs and 255 nurse leaders.

## **Results:**

Some differences were noted between IENs and CENs on perceptions of work experiences and of work here in Canada. In addition, nurse leaders described a variety of innovative models for recruiting and retaining IENs to their work settings. As well, generous orientation and mentorship strategies were highlighted along with mechanisms to reduce many of the known barriers to IEN integration into hospital work settings. Supports in place for ongoing IEN education as well as strategies aimed at successful integration of IENs into work settings were highlighted. IENs had statistically significantly higher perceptions of satisfaction with nursing as a career and their current job, quality of care provided, amount of orientation and ongoing opportunities provided for updating their skills, than their Canadian-educated counterparts.

## **Discussion:**

This study provides the first information on experiences in hiring and employing IENs; leadership strategies used to integrate IENs into the work environment; and perceptions of IEN competencies, contributions to the work environment, and quality of care in the Canadian context. The study uncovered new information on successful ways to integrate IENs into work settings.