



Starting Out: A time-lagged study of new graduate nurses' transition to practice



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ABSTRACT

Background: As the nursing profession ages, new graduate nurses are an invaluable health human resource.

Objectives: The purpose of this study was to investigate factors influencing new graduate nurses' successful transition to their full professional role in Canadian hospital settings and to determine predictors of job and career satisfaction and turnover intentions over a one-year time period in their early employment.

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Design: A national two-wave survey of new graduate nurses across Canada.

Participants: A random sample of 3906 Registered Nurses with less than 3 years of experience currently working in direct patient care was obtained from the provincial registry databases across Canada. At Time 1, 1020 of 3743 eligible nurses returned completed questionnaires (usable response rate = 27.3%). One year later, Time 1 respondents were mailed a follow-up survey; 406 returned a completed questionnaire (response rate = 39.8%).

Methods: Surveys containing standardized questionnaires were mailed to participants' home address. Descriptive statistics, correlations, and hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted using SPSS software.

Results: Overall, new graduate nurses were positive about their experiences and committed to nursing. However, over half of new nurses in the first year of practice reported high levels of emotional exhaustion and many witnessed or experienced incivility (24–42%) at work. Findings from hierarchical linear regression analyses revealed that situational and personal factors explained significant amounts of variance in new graduate nurses' job and career satisfaction and turnover intentions. Cynicism was a significant predictor of all four outcomes one year later, while Psychcap predicted job and career satisfaction and career turnover intentions.

Conclusions: Results provide a look into the worklife experiences of Canadian new graduate nurses over a one-year time period and identify factors that influence their job-related outcomes. These findings show that working conditions for new graduate nurses are generally positive and stable over time, although workplace mistreatment is an issue to be addressed.

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What is already known about the topic?

- New graduate nurses' transition to practice is a stressful period during which novice nurses are particularly vulnerable to burnout and its negative effects, including job and career dissatisfaction and turnover.
- Successful new graduate transition is facilitated by positive work environments, characterized by constructive working relationships among nurses, support for professional practice, and respect for learning needs of newcomers to the profession.

What this paper adds

- Our results add to the literature about new graduate nurses' transition experiences by showing that over a one year time frame new graduate nurses were relatively positive about their experiences and committed to nursing, though they did report high levels of burnout and incidences of bullying and incivility at work.
- Our findings showed that both situational and personal factors included in the study explained significant amounts of variance in new graduate nurses' job and career satisfaction and turnover intentions over their first year of practice.
- Cynicism was a significant predictor of all four outcomes in our study, a finding which adds to the growing body of evidence documenting the negative effects of burnout on new graduate nurses' job and career satisfaction and turnover intentions.

1. Background

As the nursing profession ages, new graduate nurses are an invaluable health human resource (Buerhaus

et al., 2009). Yet, new graduate nurse turnover rates are high in their first year of employment (Cho et al., 2012), which is costly to organizations and potentially threatens patient care (Duffield et al., 2014; Hayes et al., 2012). New nurse turnover often results from dissatisfaction with working conditions which may tarnish their feelings about the nursing profession in general and stimulate thoughts about leaving the profession altogether (Scott et al., 2008). As a large cohort of nurses approach retirement, it is important to develop and sustain work environments that promote new graduate nurse job satisfaction and retention (Laschinger et al., 2010).

Work environment characteristics have a powerful influence on new graduate nurse transition experiences. Work environments that facilitate good workplace relationships, provide autonomy and support for professional practice, and respect learning needs of new nurses have been shown to positively influence new graduate nurse retention factors, such as, job and career satisfaction and turnover intentions (Kovner et al., 2009; Scott et al., 2008). On the other hand, workplace stressors such as bullying and burnout have a negative impact on new graduate nurse retention (Laschinger and Fida, 2014, 2015). Recent research has revealed alarming levels of severe burnout among new graduate nurses (Cho et al., 2006; Laschinger and Fida, 2014; Rudman and Gustavsson, 2011). These studies highlight the need to better understand modifiable workplace factors that influence new graduate nurse retention and transition success. The purpose of this study was to investigate changes in personal and situational factors posited to influence new graduate nurses' early career retention and their relationships to job and career satisfaction and turnover intention over a one year time frame.

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