



**Educational Advancement.
A Survey of Healthcare Systems in Wisconsin**



***Taking the LEAD for Nursing in Wisconsin:
Leadership, Educational Advancement & Diversity***

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This report, as well as other reports, is dedicated to ensuring an adequate, competent and diverse nursing workforce for the people of Wisconsin and can be found at www.wicenterfornursing.org.

Background and Significance

The Institute of Medicine's report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, has advised that in order for current and future generations of nurses to deliver safe, quality, and patient-centered care, changes in education are necessary. Research shows improved patient outcomes for clients in organizations with higher percentages of BSN or higher prepared nurses. Therefore, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) calls for innovative programs that allow for a seamless transition between nursing degree programs. Furthermore, the IOM recommends that by the year 2020, 80% of the nursing workforce is educated at the baccalaureate level and that leaders from academic centers should partner with healthcare organization leaders to facilitate this goal.

Instrument and Methods

The membership of the Wisconsin Association of Nurse Executives (WONE), Wisconsin Center for Nursing (WCN), and Administrators of Nurse Education in Wisconsin (ANEW) support that the educational journey of nurses should be seamless. Already, Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) and Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) educational institutions are working together to assure this goal. We encourage organizations employing nurses to work closely with ADN, BSN, and graduate educational programs to further educational advancement.

The nursing profession must be academically prepared to meet the complex needs of the patients and communities it serves and function as an equal partner with other healthcare professions and academics. We support advancing the educational preparation of nurses, building upon the collaborative efforts already established in Wisconsin to create system pathways that promote continued nursing education which would serve as a platform for lifelong learning.

As an early step in creating system pathways, the organizations are collaborating to survey healthcare facilities and schools of nursing to identify strategies that are in place or being considered to encourage ADN-prepared nurses to return to school to obtain a BSN. This survey describes the current efforts by healthcare organizations to support academic progression in

Wisconsin. Providing exemplars of support and promotion of academic progression in Wisconsin allows us to visualize and disseminate this information.

The survey (Appendix B) was distributed to 82 Chief Nursing Officers (CNOs) of healthcare organizations in Wisconsin. The survey was available online via Qualtrics. Several reminders were sent over a two-month period in October and November 2014.

Results

In Table 1, the answers related to requirements for educational preparation are displayed. Thirty seven answered no requirement or ADN/diploma as the requirement for educational preparation, while 39 answered they preferred the BSN. The CNOs reported that in their institutions, the mean percentage of BSNs is 50% and the mean percentage of ADNs/diploma is 52%. Thirty-four of the CNOs indicated they required a BSN for leadership positions, while three indicated ADN, one indicated MSN, and three reported no specific requirement. When asked if hiring BSN-prepared nurses is part of their facility’s plan for the future, 30 reported yes and 11 reported no.

Table 1. Requirement for Education Preparation of Nurses

Question		ADN/ Diploma	BSN	No Requirement
What educational preparation do you require in hiring staff nurses?		30	4	7
What educational preparation do you prefer in hiring staff nurses?		2	39	
What is your organization’s current percentage of nurses with*:	Diploma	ADN	BSN	MSN or Higher
Mean:	5.5%	46.6%	46.3%	4.2%
Range:	1% - 15%	20.5% - 60%	20% - 64%	1% - 15.5%
No Response:	20	6	8	17
	ADN	BSN	MSN (or other graduate degree)	No Specific Requirement
What is the minimum educational requirement for nurses in leadership positions? (Defined as nursing supervisors and above).	3	34	1	3
	Yes	No		

Is hiring BSN-prepared nurses part of your facility's strategic plan for the future?	30	11	
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*Total greater than 100% due to question wording.

In Table 2, all 41 CNOs reported offering tuition reimbursement, with 34 requiring part-time status and three requiring full-time status. Twenty-eight reported a loan forgiveness program and 13 did not. When asked if there were payback provisions if the individual leaves employment, 10 replied yes and 30 replied no. Only three reported a salary difference between BSN and ADN nurses, while 32 reported no difference.

Table 2. Tuition Reimbursement / Scholarship / Salary Practices

	Full-time	Part-time	Pro-rated	None
Criteria for tuition reimbursement	3	34	1	3
	Yes	No		
Provide tuition reimbursement to assist with BSN-completion:	41	0		
In addition to tuition reimbursement, do you have a loan forgiveness program for BSN-completion?	28	13		
Are there payback provisions if the individual leaves employment?	10	30		
Is there a salary difference between BSN and ADN nurses at your facility?	3	32		

In Table 3, nine CNOs stated their institution includes “BSN” after “RN” on the name tag of nurses, while 32 reported they do not show this distinction. Twenty-four CNOs revealed that their institutions had a clinical ladder, while 17 did not. Educational level is a requirement for advancement on the career ladder for 14 of the institutions, while it is not for 16. Thirty-one of the CNOs provided information/education to their nursing staff on the impact of a BSN on patient outcomes, while 10 did not.

Table 3. Efforts to Increase the Educational Level of Nurses

	Yes	No
Does your institution include “BSN” after “RN” on the name tag of nurses?	9	32
Do you have a clinical ladder?	17	24
Is educational level a requirement for advancement on the career ladder?	14	16
Do you provide information/education to your nursing staff on the impact of a BSN on patient outcomes?	31	10

When asked if their institution was in partnership with any foundations or other private entities to advance nursing education, 12 reported yes, 21 reported no, and 5 gave no answer. When asked if they have a partnership with any academic institutions to increase the number of BSN-prepared nurses, 21 reported yes and 20 reported no.

Table 4. Partnerships

	Yes	No	No Answer	Don't Know
Are you in partnership with any foundations or other private entities to advance nursing education?	12	21	5	0
Do you have a partnership with any academic institutions to increase the number of BSN-prepared nurses?	21	20		

Conclusions

Over 15 years of rigorous research studies in the United States and other countries (Aiken, 2014) supports that BSN nurses have better patient outcomes. These studies include that a more highly educated nursing work force produces significant reductions in inpatient morbidity and mortality and reduced readmission rates. In addition, the institute of Medicine (IOM, 2010) called for a nursing workforce prepared to meet changing and complex healthcare demands. In light of these facts, the outcomes of this small survey are disconcerting. The 50% response rate to a very short survey and a lukewarm effort to embrace and implement the recommendations of the IOM (2010) report is cause for concern for hospitals in Wisconsin. It is heartening that 39 of the 42 CNOs prefer a BSN, but disheartening and disturbing that only four respondents require a BSN. It is encouraging that 30 of the 42 responding CNOs note that increasing the number of BSN-prepared nurses at their institutions is in their strategic plans, but discouraging that 11 of the respondents do not.

Over half of the respondents do not require a BSN for their clinical ladder, which gives the impression that formal education is not required for promotion. There seems to be a lack of pride in having a BSN when only nine of the respondents indicate BSN is displayed on name tags. Only three of the 42 respondents have a salary differential for BSN nurses. Half of the reporting CNOs have partnerships with educational institutions; this should be increased to 100% if we are to achieve the 80% BSN by 2020. If we are to achieve this goal, much more work needs to be done in Wisconsin.

Limitations

Relative to survey limitations, respondents were those participants who volunteered to take the online survey. Because the sample is based on those who self-selected to participate, rather than a probability sample, no estimate of sampling error can be calculated. The nature of the survey respondents themselves may be that they over-represent those who are actively promoting nurse academic advancement. Thus, the survey may be subject to multiple sources of error, including but not limited to, sampling error, coverage error, and measurement error.

Although this study essentially represents a convenience sample, it served to provide valuable information to support nurse academic advancement in Wisconsin.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Encourage all CNO's to strategically promote 80% BSN by 2020.

Recommendation 2: Develop incentives to encourage nurse academic advancement including tuition reimbursement, loan repayment plans, time off for education, higher salaries for the BSN prepared nurse.

Recommendation 3: Develop more partnerships between health care organizations and BSN granting institutions to advance the educational level of nurses to reach 80% BSN by 2020.

The survey results offer a snapshot of what CNOs in Wisconsin are doing to promote educational advancement. The results also highlight that more work and action needs to be done. The transformation of the healthcare system in the United States suggests that a more highly educated nurse workforce represents a commitment to the delivery of safe, high quality care to the people of Wisconsin.

References

Aiken, L. H. (2014). Baccalaureate nurses and hospital outcomes: More evidence. *Medical Care*, 52(10), 861-863.

Institute of Medicine (IOM). (2010). *The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health*. Retrieved from <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/The-Future-of-Nursing-Leading-Change-Advancing-Health.aspx>

Appendix A:
Consent Document

Survey on the Educational Level of Nurses

The membership of the Wisconsin Association of Nurse Executives (WONE), The Wisconsin Center for Nursing (WCN) and The Administrators of Nurse Education in Wisconsin (ANEW) support that the educational journey of nurses should be seamless. Already, ADN and BSN educational institutions are working together to assure this. Organizations employing nurses work closely with ADN, BSN and graduate educational programs.

The nursing profession must be academically prepared to meet the complex needs of the patients and communities it serves and function as an equal partner with other health care professions and academics. We support advancing the educational preparation of nurses, building upon the collaborative efforts already established in Wisconsin to create system pathways that promote continued nursing education which would serve as a platform for lifelong learning.

As an early step in creating system pathways, the organizations are partnering to survey health care facilities and schools of nursing to identify strategies that are in place or being considered to encourage ADN prepared nurses to return to school to obtain a BSN.

This survey will describe the current efforts by health care organizations to support academic progression in Wisconsin. Providing exemplars of support and promotion of academic progression in Wisconsin will allow us to visualize and disseminate this information. The survey will be available online for via a Quatrics survey sent to health care organizations in Wisconsin. Only aggregate data will be reported. No identifying information will be used in reporting the data. The only risk is the time it takes to complete the survey. The benefit is we will be able to identify successful models for academic progression. This information can help others to develop policies and initiatives that may impact nursing supply in their regions. Participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled and you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, to which you are otherwise entitled.

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Appendix B

Survey

You are being asked to complete this survey from the Wisconsin Organization of Nurse Executives (WONE) and Wisconsin Center for Nursing (WCN). **Completion of the survey will take approximately 5 minutes.** These organizations are collaborating to survey health care facilities to identify the educational level of nurses and strategies in place (or being considered) to encourage ADN-prepared nurses to obtain a BSN. A State Implementation Program, *Taking the LEAD for Nursing in Wisconsin: Leadership, Educational Advancement & Diversity* (grant #70696), awarded to WCN by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, has provided a platform for this collaborative work in our state.

Many forces are impacting nursing education and the employment environment. Some of these include the Institute of Medicines' report *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change Advancing Health* (2010), hospitals seeking Magnet status, and educational institution accreditation. WONE and WCN believe that the nursing profession must be academically prepared to meet the complex needs of patients and communities and function as equal partners with other health care professions and academics.

This survey has been approved by the UW Oshkosh Institutional Review Board IRB process and RWJF survey approval standards. The results will be shared via the WONE Horizons Newsletter, WCN newsletter and website, and the National Future of Nursing Campaign for Action.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful responses.

Section 1: Requirements for Educational Preparation of Nurses

1. What minimal educational preparation do you require in hiring staff nurses?

- ADN
- BSN
- No specific requirement for baseline RN degree

2. What educational preparation do you prefer in hiring staff nurses?

- ADN
- BSN

3. What is your organization's current percentage of nurses with:

- ADN
- BSN
- MSN
- DNP/PhD
- Don't know

4. Is hiring BSN-prepared nurses part of your facility's strategic plan for the future?

- Yes (If yes, when does that begin?)
- No

5. When hiring ADN graduates, is there an expectation that they obtain a BSN?

- Yes in 1 - 5 years
- Yes in >5 - 10 years
- No specific requirement

6. What is the minimum educational requirements for nurses in leadership positions? (Defined as nursing supervisors and above.)

- ADN
- BSN
- MSN (or other graduate degree)
- No specific requirement

Section 2: Tuition Reimbursement/ Scholarship/ Salary Practices

7. Do you provide tuition reimbursement to assist with BSN completion?

- Yes
- No

8. What are the criteria for tuition reimbursement?

- Full time
- Part time
- Pro-rated
- None

9. If future reimbursement is available, what are the dollar limits?

- ≤ \$1000 per year
- \$1001 - \$2000 per year
- \$2001 - \$3000 per year
- > \$3000 per year
- Pay tuition in full

10. Are there payback provisions if the individual leaves employment?

- Yes
- No

11. Do you have a loan forgiveness program for BSN completion?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what is the maximum that can be paid to an individual per year?

12. Is there a salary difference between BSN and ADN nurses at your facility?

- Yes
- No

Section 3: Efforts to Increase the Educational Level of Nurses

13. Does your institution include "BSN" after 'RN' on the name tags of nurses?

- Yes
- No

14. Do you have a clinical ladder?

- Yes (If yes, please briefly describe)
- No

15. Is educational level a requirement for advancement on the career ladder?

- Yes
- No

(If yes please briefly describe)

16. Have you provided information/ education to your nursing staff on the impact of a BSN on patient outcomes?

- Yes (If yes, please explain)
- No

Section 4: Partnerships

17. Do you serve as a clinical site for any ADN and/or BSN programs?

- Yes, ADN

- Yes, BSN
- Yes, Both
- No

18. Do any of your staff hold dual appointments as clinical instructors (MSN prepared) for an educational institution?

- Yes
- No

19. Do you have a partnership with any academic institutions to increase the number of BSN-prepared nurses?

- Yes (If yes, what are they)
- No

20. Are you in partnership with foundations or other private entities to advance nursing education?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.