

CDNM (ANZ) Position Statement on Bachelor of Nursing degrees in TAFE

The Council of Deans of Nursing & Midwifery (Australia & New Zealand) does not support the establishment of Bachelor of Nursing degree courses in TAFE Colleges. It believes that pre-registration nursing degrees courses should be located in the University sector.

The Council strongly supports recommendation number 22 from the National Review of Nursing Education (2002) that states:

To ensure that registered nurses are appropriately prepared for their professional roles, the minimum level of qualification for entry to practice as a registered nurse should remain a university-based bachelor degree, with a minimum length equivalent to six full-time semesters (National Review of Nursing Education, 2002:25).

The position is underpinned by the belief that nursing is a complex and demanding profession that requires the same sort of educational and scholarly preparation as other recognised health professions. This preparation takes place in Universities because of their traditions of rigorous scholarship, research-led teaching, their capacity to recruit staff at the highest professional levels, and their regular mechanisms for expert quality assurance. This context of university education is of such value to the reputation of nursing that Council deplores any steps that might diminish that value. Council believes that optimal health care for Australians requires highly educated registered nurses who can contribute to quality care. (Aiken et al., 2002; Aiken et al., 2003; Rafferty et al., 2007; Tourangeau et al., 2006).

In an extensive US study which examined 10,000 nurses and 230,000 patients from 168 hospitals from 1998-1999, it was found that each additional patient assigned to a nurse resulted in 30-day patient mortality increases by 7%; failure-to-rescue rates increase by 7%; the odds of nursing job dissatisfaction increase by 15% and the odds of nurse burnout increase by 23%. When nurses had eight patients instead of four, their patients had a 31% higher chance of dying within 30 days of admission. Forty-three percent of the nurses surveyed were burned out and emotionally exhausted. Nurses who were burned out were 4 times as likely to report that they were leaving their jobs in the next year (Aiken et al., 2002)

In a later article, Aiken et al (2003) found that for surgical patients at 168 Pennsylvania hospitals, death rates were nearly twice as high at hospitals where less than 10% of nurses had bachelor's degrees as they were at hospitals where over 70% did. The researchers concluded that recruiting nurses from bachelor's degree programs, rather than the two-year associate's degree programs that continue to produce the majority of nurses in the United States, could lead to substantial improvements in care. Aiken argued that nurses

with more formal tertiary education tend to be better at critical thinking, a key competency of nursing.

Additionally, Council is opposed to government resourcing of TAFE bachelor degree programs leading to registration as a nurse and believes that any available resources should be expended in providing additional support to University nursing degree programs. It argues that nursing programs in the University sector have for some years been under-funded. This situation has led to an inability to increase student numbers in pre-registration courses in many universities because of constrained infrastructure, worked against educational innovation on some levels and, diminished the capacity of university schools of nursing to maximise contributions to capacity building in the nursing and midwifery workforce.

If the Government was to inject additional funding into the provision of clinical placements, then universities could increase student enrolments. But, by allowing other providers into the market, matters will only be complicated with increased competition for already limited clinical places.

Council has consulted with, and concurs with the views expressed by the Australian Peak Nursing and Midwifery Forum and the Royal College of Nursing, Australia in relation to Bachelor of Nursing degrees in TAFE.

References

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