

HEALTH CARE

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Health Care: News and Information is a service of the Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC) to help our readers stay fully informed about the latest health care issues as we work to advance a high-quality health care system.

Jim Edwards, Editor

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HIT Helps With Nurse Retention

Health information technology and other measures are helping hospitals keep their nurses.

- A recent story in the Washington Post told how health care institutions have acted to recruit and retain staff nurses.
- With about 100,000 nurse jobs open around the nation, hospitals and other institutions have come up with ways to keep their nurses on the payroll.
- It's a win-win: A hospital retains staff, nurses are happier in their jobs and patient safety goes up.

More so than higher pay, many nurses simply want better working conditions.

- "Hospitals now are responding by introducing technology to dramatically reduce paperwork, offering more flexible hours, reducing caseloads, paying for advanced training and giving them more authority," the Post reported.
- A Virginia hospital saved its nurses hours of paperwork by adopting a "state-of-the-art data system."
- A Missouri hospital system let nurses set their schedule themselves. They also got a bigger voice in equipment decisions and input on patient-staff ratios.
- About 300 hospitals have been recognized as a magnet program for nurses. A University of Pennsylvania researcher has found "nurse satisfaction is significantly higher in magnet hospitals."

Nurses' job satisfaction, coupled with health IT, results in patient safety and lower health care costs.

- Nurses in Virginia suggested instructing heart patients to care for themselves better after they went home. This effort is helping to curb a high readmission rate.

- The Virginia HIT system monitors vital signs for patients in intensive care. It uses video monitors, as well. Less paperwork equals happier staff.
- An Illinois hospital has implemented a paperless record system. At its several locations, this institution has virtually stopped nurse turnover.
- Magnet hospitals, more of whose nurses have bachelor's and master's degrees, "have significantly lower mortality rates than other hospitals." Patients at magnets also "have fewer complications, keeping pharmaceutical and diagnostic costs low."

Health information technology has been shown to improve health care in many respects. It raises staff satisfaction, which is important for staff recruitment and retention. It contributes to higher patient safety, lower costs and better efficiency. Health care leaders support HIT adoption and the many benefits that will result.

The Healthcare Leadership Council, representing the innovators in each sector of the health care industry, is committed to advancing a market-based health care system that values innovation and provides affordable, high-quality care.

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