

## THE NEED

Nurses have high levels of stress due to their unpredictable daily environment. They work long hours and their schedules are constantly changing. Other factors that contribute to high stress levels are the constant, necessary clinical updates, policy revisions, increased severity of patient illnesses, and short staffing.

The stress and anxiety inherent in the nursing profession places the professional nurse at risk for burnout, not to mention personal health issues such as hypertension, cardiac disease, diabetes and obesity.

## THE PROBLEM

- The problem of nurse burnout coupled with an existing nursing shortage has placed the nursing profession and the future of health care in a dangerous position. **Thirty** percent of new graduate nurses leave their first nursing job within the first year, and **57%** leave by the second year. In your position as an administrator, I'm sure you are aware that the cost to hire and orient a replacement nurse can be as high as \$50,000, while the cost to train a critical care nurse can be \$300,000
- In Florida alone, The Florida Center for Nursing predicts that by 2025 there will be a shortage of 56,000 RN's and 12,500 LPN's in Florida, and that *nationwide* there will be a staggering shortage of 800,000 nurses. If these predictions become a reality in nine years, the nursing profession will face a catastrophic crisis. Nurses need to be able to make excellent decisions under stress at work and to be able to leave their work at the hospital so they can enjoy their life with family and friends when they go home.
- The American Nurses Association published a Position Paper in 2014 outlining the dangers of nurse fatigue: dangers for patients in terms of increased errors, and dangers of the health of the nurse. In this position statement, the ANA states:

“Nursing services are needed 24 hours a day, seven days a week in some health care settings. In such organizations, registered nurses and employers must recognize the challenges faced from disruptions to normal human physiology that are caused by night and irregular work hours; **both must adopt evidence-based strategies to reduce the associated health and safety risks.**” (The Joint Commission 2011, 2012).

**Research:** In 2014 a study published in the American Journal of Critical Care reported that nurses who were fatigued, lost sleep or couldn't recover between shifts were more likely to regret a medical decision they had made.  
<http://www.aacn.org/wd/publishing/content/pressroom/pressreleases/2014/jan/ajc-c-fatigued-nurses.pcms?menu=aboutus>)

In 2012 Cimiotti et al. concluded that the degree of nurse burnout directly influenced hand hygiene and the frequency of hospital acquired infections. They state that if the proportion of nurses experiencing burnout could be reduced by 20%, over 4000 hospital infections would be prevented in PA hospitals, leading to an estimated cost savings of \$41 million. (Nurse Staffing, Burnout and

HealthCare Associated Infection, Cimiotti, Aiken, Sloane, Wu, American Journal of Infection Control, 2012, 486-490.)

We know that all hospitals are implementing changes to lower their hospital infection rates. While new process improvements will reduce the rates, given the Cimiotti research, reduction of nurse burnout is another initiative that should be considered.

**INCIDENCE OF ADDICTION** The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that 10% of U.S. adults abuse drugs during their lifetimes. Accurate statistics are difficult to obtain because drug abuse and addiction are often cloaked in silence.

The American Nurses Association (ANA) says approximately 10% of nurses are dependent on drugs, making the incidence of drug abuse and addiction among nurses consistent with that of the U.S. population. With nearly 3 million RNs employed in the U.S. that means almost 300,000 RNs may be substance abusers; put another way, if you work with 10 nurses, one of them is likely to be struggling with addiction.

(<http://www.modernmedicine.com/modern-medicine/news/modernmedicine/modern-medicine-feature-articles/drug-addiction-among-nurses-con?page=full>)

***“More research is needed to identify best retention practices and rationale for increasing expenditures related to retaining nurses.” Florida Center for Nursing***

### **The Solution**

- Transcendental Meditation for *Women* completed a 4-month pilot study at Sarasota Memorial Hospital with 27 nurses who learned the Transcendental Meditation technique. Four phenomena were measured using validated scales: compassion fatigue, resilience, secondary traumatic stress, and nurse burnout. The improvements measured were statistically significant. In addition, nurses reported improved health, reduced depression, better ability to focus and improved patient care. (<http://www.tm-women.org/nurses/>).
  - **Continuing Education:** The Transcendental Meditation program for Nurses has been approved to offer 23 ANCC contact hours of continuing education in 49 states (ex CA). Nurses may also earn 2 University credits when they take the course.

Nurses are the trusted infrastructure that provide healthcare to the whole population. Like roads and bridges, if that infrastructure breaks down, healthcare will not be able to be delivered, and the consequences will be dire. It is imperative that the nurses continue to maintain their excellence by remaining rested, healthy, resilient and able to provide their best care.