The ‘Nursing Turnover and Outcomes’ study is a three year ARC funded study being conducted by Professor Christine Duffield, Michael Roche and Professor Caroline Homer from UTS, with an international team of associates including Professor Linda O’Brien-Pallas of the University of Toronto, Canada, Professor James Buchan of Queen Margaret University College, UK and Dr Judith Shamian of the Victorian Order of Nurses, Canada.

The goal of this study is to provide an evidence base to understand the incidence of nurse turnover, its predictors and costs. Specifically, the study will determine how the rate and intensity of nursing turnover impacts patient satisfaction and safety, nurse satisfaction and turnover costs. An understanding of the consequences of turnover will assist policy makers to design strategies and policies to retain and recruit nurses as the market competition increases.

This study is timely given the global shortage of nurses. A focus on understanding reasons why nurses might leave their employer and the impact of their decisions will provide an evidence base for planning retention strategies.

The issues surrounding nurse retention are complex and multifactorial.

Overseas evidence has linked nurse satisfaction to the working environment, better patient outcomes and intention to leave but Australian research in this area is minimal.

The data collected for this study from 11 hospitals and 60 wards, will concentrate on the influence of organisational and ward characteristics and costs in relation to nurse turnover. Patient data will focus on Outcomes Sensitive to Nursing (OPSN), which include falls, length of stay, wound and urinary tract infections, emboli and decubitus ulcers. Nurse data will examine nurse satisfaction, leadership and nurses’ intention to leave the ward, hospital or even nursing.

The study is being conducted across Western Australia (seven hospitals), Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Service in NSW (three hospitals) and the Australia Capital Territory (one hospital) within Australia over a three year period. Data collection is in two waves, conducted one year apart, to enable comparisons between recruitment and retention variations at each site.

Data collection for wave one of this project commenced in NSW in September 2008 and has subsequently been rolled out across WA and ACT. The Nurse Turnover study has been implemented within 11 hospitals over the two States and the ACT, incorporating 60 medical-surgical wards and the distribution of over 1500 nurse survey forms (to date).

Wave two of data collection will commence in NSW in September 2009, followed by WA and the ACT in 2010.

Data entry from wave one is currently in progress and results will be reported to the participating hospitals in due course.

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