

LVN to RN Bridge Programs

What a shame that thousands of prospective nursing students are routinely turned away from California nursing programs, especially with our state suffering a severe nursing shortage.

Recently, the governor signed legislation mandating that nursing schools in the state allow licensed vocational nurses to become registered nurses with just one to two years of additional training. Now, through the use of these LVN to RN bridge programs, most LVNs can become registered nurses in three years.

Currently, all RN programs are severely impacted, with waiting lists of up to three or four years. Moreover, the programs require potential candidates to successfully complete numerous prerequisites, including chemistry, physiology, anatomy, microbiology and psychology. Most programs also require students to present a certified nursing assistant certificate. In addition, most of the prerequisites require other prerequisites.

Obviously, it is difficult to get accepted into a nursing program. With prerequisites and the waiting lists, it takes an average student six to seven years to become a registered nurse with an associate's degree. As a result, many qualified, potential registered nurses fall by the wayside.

Additionally, nursing school is a lot like boot camp, in that students who fall below 75 percent on exams and those who do not exhibit professional behaviors may be "weeded out" from a program that they worked so hard to get into, instead of being mentored for success.

Most vocational nursing programs are less difficult to get into and take only one to two years to complete. Now, once students successfully take the state examination and become licensed, they can then apply to one of many RN bridge programs offered at California colleges. If this option were fully utilized, it could help produce more RNs and, of course, LVNs, too.

Those who choose to remain as vocational nurses can also help ease the nursing shortage. Under their full scope of practice, LVNs can perform many of the same tasks as registered nurses, such as administering medication and treatments.

As an educator of vocational nursing students, I have a renewed appreciation for the magnitude of education required to obtain a license. It encompasses more than 900 hours of clinical training and 600 hours of theory lecture.

Thanks to bridge programs, those hundreds of students who received rejection letters from RN programs, no longer need to wait six or more years to start a career in nursing. Clearly, LVNs can help ease the nursing shortage by being utilized to their full scope of practice. Moreover, LVNs can escape the long waiting lists and most prerequisites required for entrance into RN programs.

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