

## **Traveler Trend**

Health care professionals can stay ahead by being proactive trend observers. The growth potential for travel nursing is on the rise. The demand will only increase as the demand for nurses increases. The demand for other health care workers will also increase as the population continues to grow and age.

Meanwhile, the hospitals are merging, ordering hiring freezes, and decreasing benefits in order to cut costs to compensate for increased medical expenses. The U.S. spends 12% to 13% on health care while other industrialized nations only spend 5% to 7% on health care (Johnson, 1999, p.5). In the changing, cost-conscious, health care environment of today, health care facilities must identify and implement strategies to promote fiscal responsibility.

Job security is becoming a concept of the past. Individuals are becoming more of a company within themselves. Health care professionals can no longer rely on a single employer to promise work in return for their loyalty. A self-employed attitude is necessary to adapt to this new environment. The good news is that work options are abundant, for the self-reliant, self-motivated, and proactive professional. Kevin Lumsdon, a health care expert, explains the need for nurses to be flexible. With experience, nurses can market themselves throughout the country. They will have a hard time earning top dollar if they are bound to one community (Johnson, 1999, p.13).

Traveling originated around 20 years ago, when medical staffing agencies began providing their services to other states. Initially, these agencies provided services to cover seasonal shortages in places such as: Arizona, Florida, and California. Presently, seasonal demand is only one of many reasons for traveling staff placement. Travel nursing is soaring as it fills in the need created by the dichotomy of cost containment versus increased demand for nurses, especially during busy seasons and staff turnover.

By hiring travelers, hospitals may save money and not have to lay off employees as needs fluctuate. Sometimes, travelers aid in the implementation of new care models by allowing permanent staff the necessary time to become educated on new procedures.

Travelers provide continuity of care when compared to local daily agency staffing. With local agency staffing, the hospital could get a variety of different nurses working in the area, if one is even available that day. Travel nurses, on the other hand, are there on contract for at least 3 months. In other words, the hospital has more reliable and consistent coverage during the time of the contract.

Experienced health care travelers have a broad knowledge base from working in so many different facilities. They can offer information about new procedures and methods to increase quality and efficiency.

“Flexible staffing is in; that is a fact” (Thraikill 1999, p.5). The demand for health care travelers is rising as the need for nurses and other health professionals rise and the benefits of travelers are recognized by health care facilities.

### **Bibliography**

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