

2023

# Addressing the challenges internationally educated nurses experience when transitioning to work in the UK: co-producing a behavioural change project with hospital ward leaders

Onyancha, Cynthia

Onyancha, C. (2023). 'Addressing the challenges internationally educated nurses experience when transitioning to work in the UK: co-producing a behavioural change project with hospital ward leaders', South West Clinical School Journal, 3 (1).

<https://pearl.plymouth.ac.uk/handle/10026.1/20690>

---

<https://doi.org/10.24382/sgss-cg37>

University of Plymouth

---

*All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.*

Special Edition

#400WORDS: CHIEF NURSE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP EVIDENCE IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

## Addressing the challenges internationally educated nurses experience when transitioning to work in the UK: co-producing a behavioural change project with hospital ward leaders

Cynthia Onyancha<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Deputy Ward Leader. Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust, TRURO, TR1 3LJ, UK

Email: [cynthia.bochereonyancha@nhs.net](mailto:cynthia.bochereonyancha@nhs.net)

Submitted for publication: 25 February 2023

Accepted for publication: 13 March 2023

Published: 31 March 2023

### Background

Post Brexit, the United Kingdom (UK) has seen an increase of internationally educated nurses (IENs), recruited to solve a chronic and growing skills shortage. Foreign nurses accounted for 10.3% of the workforce in England's National Health Service (NHS) in 2017 (Bond *et al.*, 2020). IENs face many challenges as they try to adapt in the host country. Integration is a dynamic process that requires a collective effort of leaders, native staff members and IENs.

### Review of the evidence

A systematic literature search was conducted using the PubMed database to explore IEN's experiences and determine the role managers play in their transition and retention. Key words included 'recruitment', 'international nurses', 'staff retention' and 'leadership characteristics' were used. This resulted in a selection of seven relevant studies from the twenty articles that were reviewed. Commonalities identified included:

Communication barriers: According to Bond *et al.*, (2020), IENs experience difficulties understanding patients with varying English accents and talking speed or acquiring colloquialisms and slang. Language barriers can make it harder for international nurses to communicate with their co-workers and patients which can reduce their self-esteem. Pressley *et al.*, (2022) argues that one's competency is often judged based on their ability to express themselves eloquently.

Nurse workload: IENs experience significant physical and mental health changes due to burnout and high workload, which in turn lowers their productivity, increases staff turnover and negatively impacts patient care and safety (Khamisa *et al.*, 2015, Pérez-Francisco *et al.*, 2020, Shah *et al.*, 2021).

Career challenges: There is less likelihood for IENs to apply for higher positions. Bond *et al.*, (2020) states that increasing the number of foreign nurses on managerial or

supervisory positions will enable IENs to gain confidence to seek career advancement opportunities.

**Leadership support:** The ability of leaders to use both transformational and transactional leadership styles help to empower and motivate employees, which in turn enhances their effectiveness resulting into improved job satisfaction and retention levels (Jodar *et al.*, 2016).

## Project plan

Using findings from the literature, this project will use the JBI evidence implementation model (Porritt *et al.*, 2020) to engage stakeholders and co-produce a behavioural change project. Quantitative and qualitative data to inform the practice change will be collected from surveys and engagement groups. The project aims to identify leadership characteristics that can be reinforced to support IENs assimilate well in their new environments, leading to improve quality of their lived experience and care provided, longer-term increasing staff retention rates.

## References

- Bond, S., Merriman, C. and Walthall, H. (2020) 'The experiences of international nurses and midwives transitioning to work in the UK: A qualitative synthesis of the literature from 2010 to 2019', *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 110, pp. 103693. Available at: <https://europepmc.org/article/MED/32673813> (Accessed on 24 February 2023).
- Jodar I, Solà, G., Gené I Badia, J., Hito, P.D., Osaba, M.A. and Del Val García, J.L. (2016) 'Self-perception of leadership styles and behaviour in primary health care'. *BMC Health Services Research*, 16(1), pp. 572. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27733141> (Accessed on 12 March 2023).
- Khamisa, N., Oldenburg, B., Peltzer, K. and Ilic, D. (2015) 'Work related stress, burnout, job satisfaction and general health of nurses', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 12(1), pp. 652–666. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25588157> (Accessed on 12 March 2023).
- Pérez-Francisco, D.H., Duarte-Clíments, G., del Rosario-Melián, J.M., Gómez-Salgado, J., Romero-Martín, M. and Sánchez-Gómez, M.B. (2020) 'Influence of workload on primary care nurses' health and burnout, patients' safety, and quality of care: Integrative Review', *Healthcare*, 8(1), pp. 12. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-9032/8/1/12> (Accessed on 24 February 2023).
- Porritt, K., McArthur, A., Lockwood, C., Munn, Z. (2020) JBI Handbook for Evidence Implementation. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36545902> (Accessed on 23 February 2023).
- Pressley, C., Newton, D., Garside, J., Simkhada, P., Simkhada, B. (2022) 'Global migration and factors that support acculturation and retention of international nurses: A systematic review'. *International Journal of Nursing Studies Advances*, 4 (12). Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666142X2200> (Accessed on 22 February 2023).
- Pung, L.X. and Goh, Y.S. (2017) Challenges faced by international nurses when migrating: an integrative literature review. *International Nursing Review*, 64(1). Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27501277> (Accessed on 23 February 2023).
- Shah, M. K., Gandrakota, N., Cimiotti, J. P., Ghose, N., Moore, M. and Ali, M. K. (2021) 'Prevalence of and Factors Associated with Nurse Burnout in the US', *JAMA Network Open*, 4(2), e2036469. Available at: <https://europepmc.org/article/MED/33538823> (Accessed on 12 March 2023).



This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence (see <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>) which permits others to copy and redistribute in any medium or format, remix, transform and on a non-commercial basis build on this work, provided appropriate credit is given. Changes made need to be indicated, and distribution must continue under this same licence.