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REFRESHER COURSE SURVEY 2010

BACKGROUND

In 2003, the Arizona State Board of Nursing implemented a requirement for 960 hours of nursing practice within the previous 5 years (equivalent to 6 months full time) to renew an RN or LPN license. Renewing nurses are asked to sign a statement testifying that they practice and provide the practice setting. The Board interprets “practice” consistent with the statutory definitions of registered and practical nursing (A.R.S.§ 32-1601) which includes non-patient care activities. Nurses engaged in consulting, recruiting nurses, teaching, coordinating care and supervision of nursing or nursing related services would meet the practice requirement. “Practice” also includes providing nursing services in a volunteer capacity and any employment where the license is required or recommended. If a nurse does not have the required hours of practice, the nurse may either inactivate the license or enroll in a refresher course. Arizona State Board of Nursing approved refresher courses have been surveyed since 2006 regarding enrollments and completion.

The criterion for approval of a refresher course includes:

- A minimum of 40 hours of didactic instruction and 112 hours of supervised clinical practice for a licensed practical nurse program;
- A minimum of 80 hours of didactic instruction and 160 hours of supervised clinical practice for a registered nurse program;
- A planned and supervised clinical experience that is consistent with course goals and provides an opportunity for the student to demonstrate safe and competent application of program content. The student may spend up to 24 of the required clinical hours in a supervised lab setting;
- Instruction in current nursing care concepts and skills including:
 - Nursing process;
 - Pharmacology, medication calculation, and medication administration;
 - Communication;
 - Critical thinking and clinical decision making;
 - Delegation, management, and leadership; and
 - Meeting psychosocial and physiological needs of clients

DATA COLLECTED

Refresher courses approved by the Arizona State Board of Nursing were asked to provide information regarding their courses for the calendar year. The information requested consists of:

- The number of persons admitted into the refresher program
- The number of persons still enrolled from the previous year
- The number of graduates
- The number still enrolled into the next calendar year but progressing at the recommended pace
- The number of persons who failed or withdrew
- The number of persons continuing, but are repeating or lagging

In 2007 the data form was revised to separate RN and LPN enrollments.

Results 2010

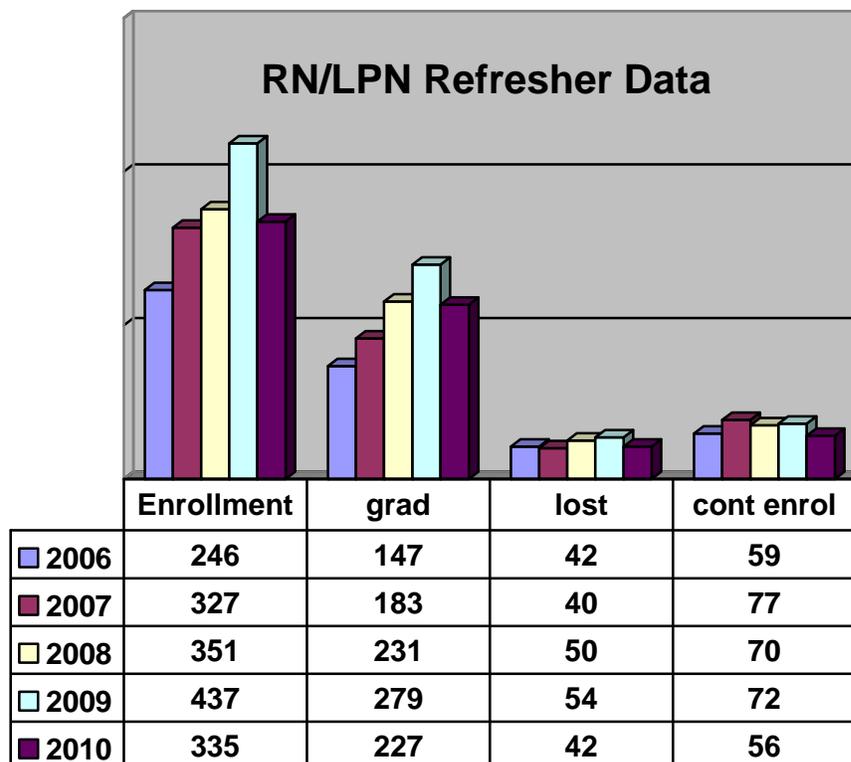
Eight RN and 5 LPN refresher programs reported enrollments in 2010. One recently approved LPN refresher program reported that they had no admissions for the year. Reporting RN programs include: Pima Community College Center for Training and Development, GateWay Community College, Consolidated Learning Systems, Mesa Community College, Mohave Community College, Northland Pioneer College, South Dakota State University, and SEVEN Academy. Reporting LPN programs include: Pima Community College Center for Training and Development, GateWay Community College, Mohave Community College, Northland Pioneer College, and SEVEN Academy. The aggregate results are included below.

Number of RN refresher students admitted to the refresher program in 2010: Total=238	Number of RN students admitted in 2009 who continued enrollment into 2010: Total=55	Number of RNs students who graduated from the program in 2010: Total=190	Of those admitted in 2010, number of RNs continuing in the program into 2011 at the recommended pace (e.g. regular students): Total=43	Number of RNs who failed or withdrew from the program in 2010: Total=41	Number of RNs who remain in the program but are repeating or lagging due to failure or other reasons: Total=9
Number of PN refresher students admitted in 2010: Total=36	Number of PN students admitted in 2009 who continued enrollment into 2010: Total=6	Number of PN students who graduated from the program in 2010: Total=37	Of those admitted in 2009 number of PNs continuing in the program into 2011 at the recommended pace (e.g. regular students): Total = 4	Number of PNs who failed or withdrew from the program in 2010: Total=11	Number of PNs who remain in the program but are repeating or lagging due to failure or other reasons: Total=0

With 274 new enrollees and 61 continuing students there were a total of 335 persons enrolled in a nurse refresher course in 2010. This is a decrease of 102 (23%) students when compared to total enrollments in 2009 (437 in 2009). 227 students (68% of enrollees) graduated in calendar year 2010 and 47 are continuing at the normal pace, indicating that 82% of students are either successful or have the potential for success. This is similar to 2008 and 2009 when 84% and 80% respectively of enrolled students were either successful or had the potential for success. Fifty-two students (16%) were lost to the program either through failure or withdrawal, similar to 2008 and 2009 when 14% and 12% failed or withdrew. Nine students (3%) lagged (continuing but at less than the recommended pace), similar to the 2% lagging in 2008 and 2009. Trended data on the chart below indicates that 2010 was similar to previous years in terms of enrollee success.

Programs were also asked to report how many students enrolled as a result of a consent agreement or Board disciplinary order. There were 9 such students in 2010 compared to 6 such students in 2009.

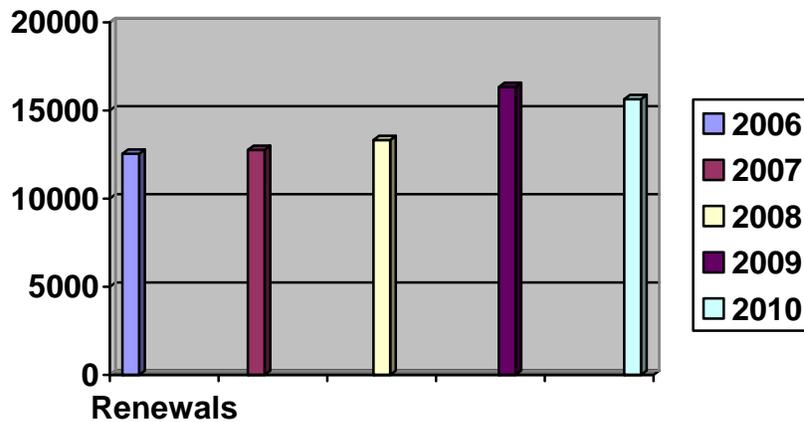
Programs were asked to report how they verified licensure prior to clinical experiences. All reported either using the Board of Nursing website or placing a copy of the license in the student's file. Six of the eight reporting schools used both methods of verification. The Board requires either a temporary or permanent license to complete the clinical portion of the program.



Total Renewing Nurses and Refresher Course Enrollments

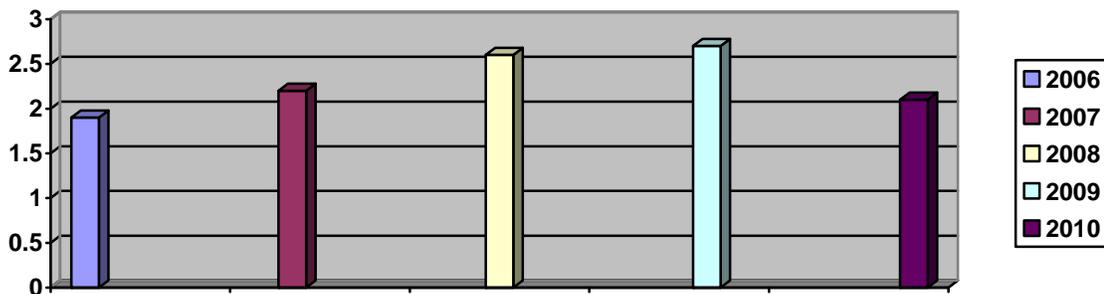
In 2010, 15,635 nurses renewed their license, a slight 6 % decrease over 2009 (16,337) and an increase over renewals from 2006-2008. This decrease in renewals may account for some of the decrease seen in refresher course enrollments. Other causes may be difficulty obtaining employment as a refreshed nurse and knowledge of the need to maintain active practice to renew a license resulting in fewer nurses leaving the workforce for extended periods. Programs opined that at the start of the recession many nurses sought refresher program; now that there are some favorable economic indicators, most nurses needing to refresh either have done so or have decided not to further pursue nursing as a career.

Nurses Renewing License



Enrollments in refresher courses represent 2.1% of all 2010 renewal applications, a decrease from 2007-2009. Enrollment figures may be slightly inflated due to the same person re-enrolling in a different course after withdrawal or failure. Refresher courses report that 10-30% of enrollees are not mandated to take the course as a condition of renewal but chose to re-train for a new clinical role in nursing.

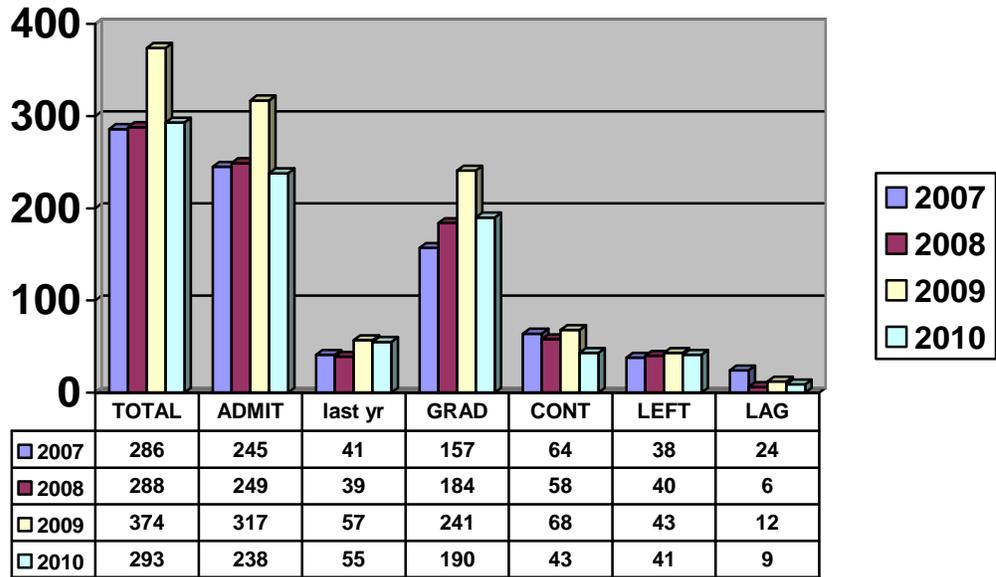
Percent of renewing nurses enrolled in a refresher course



RN Refresher Programs

The bulk of refresher program students are RN refreshers. The numbers of RN refresher students decreased by 22% in 2010 but is similar to enrollments in both 2007 and 2008 where there were similar numbers of renewing nurses. Of total enrollments 81% were admitted within the calendar year and 19% were continuing from 2009. This closely mirrors the proportion of admitted to continuing students in 2007, 2008 and 2009. In 2010, 190 (65%) refreshers successfully completed within the calendar year, 14% withdrew or failed, and 15% are continuing enrollment into 2011. 3% of students are either lagging behind the recommended pace or repeating the course due to failure. These ratios closely resemble those from 2007, 2008, and 2009. The decrease in enrollments in refresher courses in 2010 occurred in both RN and PN programs.

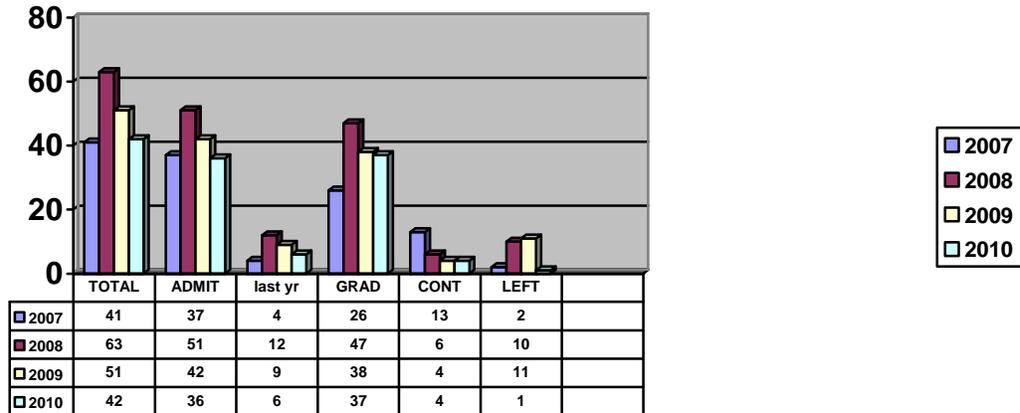
RN REFRESEHER



LPN Refresher Programs

Fewer LPNs enrolled in refresher courses in 2010 as compared to 2009 and 2008. In 2010 there were 42 LPN refresher students as compared to 51 in 2009 and 63 in 2008. This represents an 18% decrease from 2009. 88% of enrolled students graduated in 2010, compared to 75% in 2009 and 2008 and 63% in 2007. Only one LPN student failed and there were no students lagging behind.

LPN REFRESEHER



DISCUSSION 2010

The annual meeting of all refresher courses took place on April 19, 2011. Discussion focused on program innovations and challenges. Innovations included:

- Addition of a transition course for new graduates unable to obtain employment and refresher students incorporating 240 hours of clinical preceptorship
- Courses geared to those who do not pass NCLEX within 2 years of graduation
- One college acquired funding for technology to support pediatric, obstetric and specialty preparation for preceptorships
- Incorporation of an evidence-based project not only helped students with gathering evidence but improved computer skills.

Challenges experienced by program included:

- Finding clinical placements
- Older students lacking computer skills
- Internationally educated students experience difficulties adapting to the American health care culture and environment

DISCUSSION 2009

The annual meeting of all refresher courses took place on April 9, 2010. Discussion focused on evidence for success of refresher graduates and clinical placements. Discussion included:

- Presentation of an offering for a transition course for currently practicing nurses seeking career moves to a new care setting; this course would not need Board approval and may also be suitable for new graduates who lack employment.
- One program is cutting back on refresher enrollments due to lack of clinical space
- Clinical space may be more available in dialysis units and the OR
- Programs are adding simulation to refresher courses and report the students are enjoying it

- The issue of Board referrals was discussed. Participants were asked to compile case studies of each Board referral including factors that contributed to their success or failure in the course.
- It was agreed that refresher programs would retain student records for a period of 3 years
- Bontrager provided an overview of licensure issues including a handout on the process to obtain a Temporary License for Refresher Course Only.

DISCUSSION 2008

At the annual refresher course provider meeting held in the Board offices on February 5, 2009. The following is a reflection of the discussion that took place at the meeting as categorized by issues facing refresher course providers.

Out of practice for extended periods

- Older nurses in their 60s and above are trying to come back into nursing; many are successful; nurses out of practice more than 15 years need extra attention that is not provided in a basic on-line refresher course;
- Those who have never worked need more structure than a basic on-line refresher course can provide; Instructed clinical has helped students who have been out more than 15 years;
- One program requires those nurses out more that 20 years to fill out a questionnaire and self evaluation; they are also directed to talk to nurses in health care facilities to ascertain the differences in practice over the past 2 decades; many potential students, realizing the obstacles, elect not to enroll, but 3 individuals did enroll, were successfully mentored and completed the course;

Computer Skills

- Refresher students need to obtain computer skills—many do not have e-mail or know how to attach a document;
- Refresher students are under the impression that an on-line program is easier despite not having computer skills

Clinical Preceptorships/Hiring

- It was the consensus of all programs that finding preceptors/clinical is very difficult
- Up to 30% in one program do not finish related to inability to find preceptor
- Facilities are reluctant to take precepted refreshers due to liability issues;
- It is “impossible” to obtain preceptors in Phoenix hospitals but some alternative placements are successfully obtained;
- One program has successfully placed students who subsequently were hired at Catholic Health Care West, Hacienda los Ninos, and other rehabilitation facilities; this program has also successfully placed every LPN;
- Most acute care facilities have a hiring freeze;
- There are too many new grads for acute care to consider refresher students as hires; in the past most refresher students were hired by the preceptor agency but that is not the case this year; even new LPN grads are having difficulty being hired in long-term care

Board Ordered Refresher Students

- Students under Board order for a refresher course are having difficulty obtaining insurance; this is usually only a problem if the nurse's license was revoked or suspended; GateWay offered that such students would be covered under group insurance if they attended their program;
- Board ordered refreshers take a tremendous amount of time; one program stated that most board-ordered nurses in their program had significant behavior problems and dysfunction; if the problems stemmed from a medical problem, the program has been successful in teaching the student; if there are underlying psychological problems, the student requires intensive counseling.
- Students on Board order were reported to do better in a program where there is more traditional structure and instructed clinicals;
- CANDO students do very well;

Innovations

- Mesa CC received a grant from the DOE to pilot modules; their program will change to a series of core modules covering all of basic nursing and ½ credit of pharmacology; after completing the core modules, the student may choose a specialty path (med-surg, OB, peds) and take that module plus another ½ credit in pharmacology specific to the specialty; clinical would be in the area of choice
- GateWay changed their case studies to multi-system case studies and is incorporating evidence-based practice concepts; they require a final paper with 10 references; drug dosage calculation tests must be passed or the student will need to complete a math class; they have also added an additional 1 credit on-line class on medication errors and documentation. GateWay is starting an evening refresher program at the end of March for RNs only and is developing a live class on ethical decision making to start Fall '09.
- Pima Community College CTD is requiring a "shadow" experience the first week of the course; many students find this "scary" but some enjoy it so much that they elect to do multiple shadowing experiences; the student finds their own nurse to "shadow" and since no hands-on care is delivered, there is no need for insurance/agreement etc.
- Abrazo reported that they conducted clinical concurrent with didactic instruction matching patients to the module discussed; students seem to enjoy this;
- SEVEN Academy has received approval from the South Dakota Board of Nursing—is working with the Board to see if compact extends to refresher course license so nurse can complete clinical in South Dakota;

SUMMARY 2008

It was the consensus of the group that clinical placements and future employment is more difficult to obtain for refresher students in the current economic environment. Successful strategies for students out of practice 15 years or more include shadowing, pre-course interview, and structured class and clinical experiences. Board ordered students also appear to do better in a structured classroom and clinical environment. Innovations include tailoring the course to specialty areas of class, incorporating EBP, shadowing, and concurrent clinical reflecting didactic content. All participants agreed that the meeting was helpful and they enjoyed sharing their experiences.

CASE STUDY—2007

Nurse A graduated from nursing school over 25 years ago. She worked for less than a year as a nurse, then returned to school and earned a master's degree in counseling. She has continuously worked as a counselor in a mental-health setting for 25 years. She sought licensure in AZ but did not qualify since she has not worked as a nurse for over 25 years. As required by the Board, she enrolled in a refresher course and requested a clinical experience in a psych-mental health clinic. Her performance in the didactic portion of the course was erratic with widely varying scores for tests and quizzes. She had difficulty with pharmacology and math calculations, but seemed to compensate and presented believable rationale for her performance. She was well liked by faculty and fellow students. She was placed in a psych mental health clinical setting and her preceptor noted several deficiencies in her nursing care. The preceptor stated that it appeared that she never really practiced nursing. She could not appropriately draw blood or administer an IM injection despite repeated coaching and instruction. She also did not seem to be aware of her limitations. Although she was considered stellar in interviewing patients and mastered the psychosocial aspects of patient care, she could never adequately demonstrate the nursing skills expected. She subsequently failed her clinical experience and was offered another clinical experience in a long-term care setting where basic nursing skills could be honed. She attended for a brief period, then decided not to seek licensure and dropped the program. A complaint was filed against the program for poor preparation of the student for clinical. The program made several changes to their policies and the Board dismissed the complaint in light of the remediation instituted by the program.