Psychiatric Mental Health Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) in Vermont
Summary of Board of Nursing Relicensure Survey, March 2005

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Background
In order to provide Vermonters with useful information on the status of Vermont’s nursing workforce, the Office of Nursing Workforce Research, Planning, and Development, in collaboration with the Vermont Board of Nursing, conducted a Relicensure survey which was mailed to Vermont Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs). The survey was included in relicensure materials and was not mandatory. The survey was completed in March, 2005 by 299 APRNs who reported being currently employed in Vermont (62% response rate). This report includes data relating to 37 APRNs (12% of full VT APRN sample) who described their current position as Mental Health.

Basic Demographics (n=37):
• 84% of PMH APRNs are female; 14% are male
• 92% of Vermont PMH APRNs are Caucasian
• Age range – 30-83 yrs.
• Mean age: 53 years; 92% are 45 years or older

Nursing Education Preparation for PMH APRNs:
• 78% completed a Master’s Degree in nursing (or higher)
• 10% completed a post-Master’s certificate

Other Educational Information:
• 94% report obtaining their nursing education for APRN in a state other than Vermont
• 13% reported having a doctoral degree (one in nursing; four in non-nursing fields)
• One participant is currently enrolled in a doctoral program

Major Activity:
• 70% of VT PMH APRNs identified patient care as their major activity
• 8% identified nurse administrator as their major activity
• 10% described teaching/instruction as their major activity
• 10% listed “other” as major activity

Current Position:
• 51% report being in their current position for five years or less.
• 16% were somewhat or very likely to leave their principal APRN position over the next year

Employment (setting of primary position)

- 51% of PMH APRNs are employed in more than one position
- 24% report working in solo practice
- 27% responded “other” to this question
- 5% report working in a hospital outpatient setting
- 8% work in a hospital inpatient setting
- 13% report working in a community health center
- 21% work in a MD/APRN practice
Reasons Given For Considering Leaving (more than one reason could be chosen):

- Co-workers (n=2)
- Stress (n=1)
- Salary (n=1)
- Supervisor (n=1)

One respondent reported considering a move to relocate in New Hampshire, where collaborative practice agreements with MDs are not mandated.

Comparison to Full Sample of Vermont APRNs:

- VT PMH APRNs include a higher percentage of men (>13%) compared to full VT APRNs sample (9%)
- Mean age of PMH APRNs is older (53 years) compared to full APRN sample (49 years)
- A higher percentage of PMH APRNs received their master’s or post master’s certificate out of state (>94%) compared to the full APRN sample (75%)

Discussion:

This summary report adds to the available information about Psychiatric Mental Health Advanced Practice Nurses in Vermont. Awareness of this group is important, as there continues to be a lack of mental health treatment providers, especially prescribers, in rural states such as Vermont. As a group, Vermont PMH APRNs are older, include more men and have more post baccalaureate education as compared to the full sample of Vermont APRNs who responded to the survey. The great majority of these PMH APRN participants (>94%) reported getting their advanced practice degrees in a state other than Vermont. Even though the PMH APRNs from this study report practice locations in 11 counties, over 40% of the PMH APRNs are practicing in only two Vermont counties. The population of PMH APRNs in Vermont is limited with one PMH APRN for every 16,839 people. According to clinician shortage data, there is a critical shortage of PMH care providers for the Vermont counties of: Grand Isle, Franklin, Essex and Orleans. Based on the current report, there is one PMH APRN available for every 28,351 people in these combined rural counties.

Future surveys may address data related to Vermont numbers of PMH APRNs who work with children and adolescents, as a shortage of these providers is recognized nationwide. In addition, there is growing evidence that the needs of elderly people with mental health concerns are not being adequately met, especially in rural areas.

PMH APRNs have the potential to fill these gaps and subsequently to improve access to mental health services. As one means of addressing the shortage of PMH APRNs in Vermont, the University of Vermont has developed a new PMH APRN Program since this survey was done.

References:


