

LEADERSHIP THINK TANK

Meeting Date:

December 14, 2022

Executive Summary

*Hosted by AONL Foundation
for Nursing Leadership Research
and Education*

**Nurse Managers
and Front-Line
Nurse Leaders**

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ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP THINK TANK PROGRAM

The AONL Foundation Leadership Think Tanks bring leaders from health care practice and industry together to discuss important issues and brainstorm next steps to move the needle on these topics. By contributing to the momentum around important topics in health care, the ultimate goal is to make meaningful improvements in health utilizing the steps identified by the Think Tank.

Key Take Aways

This Think Tank discussed the challenges facing nurse managers, which have implications across the health care field.

Drawing on the work of the AONL Workforce Task Force and the first two chapters of the [Nursing Leadership Workforce Compendium](#) focusing on Talent Attraction and Acquisition and Recruitment and Retention, the goal of this Think Tank is to identify strategies to accelerate or amplify efforts to improve the work life of nurse managers and front-line nurse leaders.

Talent Attraction and Acquisition

Photo credit:
UW Health

Develop relationships with candidates and new hires through multiple touchpoints before, during and after the hiring process.

Look for ways to adjust the hiring process to fit the needs of the talent pool including:

- Consider hiring nurses and support staff with associate degrees and other licenses (LVN, LPN, CNA, etc.)
- Implement “no-nurse-left-behind” policies.

Reemphasize the importance of strong academic-practice partnership programs between health care organizations and academic institutions – These programs often result in externs, interns and program participants become full-time employees at the health care organizations after graduation.

Key Take Aways

Recruitment and Retention

Maintain a positive work culture where staff are encouraged to fully disengage from work during their time off, including nights, weekends and paid time off.

Deconstruct, examine, and define the role of the nurse manager and competencies to successfully retain current and recruit new nurse managers.

Nurse managers have an overwhelming number of responsibilities, and in some respects, there are unreasonable expectations for them to supervise a wide span of units and front-line nurses without support.

Photo credit:
Cedars-Sinai Hospital



Actionable Next Steps

Support the AONL Workforce Committee and their work focusing on the nurse manager role including:

- Span of control.
- Value of nurse manager.
- Nurse manager job redesign.
- Other topics as related to this Think Tank discussion.

One tangible way the AONL Foundation can do this is by funding and supporting studies around the nurse manager role.

Continue to support meaningful recognition of nurse managers through Beyond Gratitude and other initiatives. Research could be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions supporting meaningful recognition.

Define the value, role and competencies of nurse managers through future research.

Visit the Role of [Nurse Manager Think Tank webpage](#) for more information and resources.



Photo credit: Advocate Christ Medical Center

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Presentation: Nurse Manager Work/Life Balance and Retention

***Nora Warshawsky** and **Karen Hill** gave a presentation about the challenges of retaining nurse managers and ensuring their work/life balance. They introduced the AONL Workforce Compendium as a basis for discussion.*

Challenges Faced by Nurse Managers

- 45% of Nurse Managers report they are considering leaving their roles:
 - Due to burnout.
 - Due to poor work/life balance.
- Only 47% report they are emotionally healthy or very emotionally healthy.
- Top 3 challenges are staff emotional health, retention, and reduction of traveler use (American Organization for Nursing Leadership Foundation's 2024 Longitudinal Nursing Leadership Insight Study, 2022).

Discussion Questions

- Refer to the table on [page 11 of the Nursing Leadership Workforce Compendium](#), what has worked well for you and your team?
- What is the one big thing we (leveraging national leaders) could focus on to accelerate or amplify our results?

Talent Attraction and Acquisition

Referencing the Talent Attraction section of the AONL Workforce Compendium as a starting point, the participants discussed the current state of nurse and nurse manager talent attraction.

Participants agreed that developing relationships before hiring is key to retention.

Some ideas the participants suggested to increase retention were:

- Establish multiple touchpoints before, during and after the hiring process with the applicant.
- Train nurses more effectively.
- Create a positive work culture.
- Focus on wellness within new graduate residency programs.
- Offer opportunities for prospective nurses to interview and shadow with current staff members.
- Learn the personal goals for each prospective hire to build a meaningful relationship early on, and promote career advancement.
- Place nurses into areas of practice that they want, because if they don't have their first choice, they may leave for a competitor.
- Implement changes to the application and interview process:
 - Interview candidates on days, nights, and weekends for their convenience.
 - Adopt a no-nurse-left-behind strategy, in which nurses who are interviewed but not chosen for a given position are immediately interviewed by talent acquisition and considered for other open positions.



Photo credit: Mercy Hospital Bakersfield

Participants agreed that developing relationships before hiring is a key to retention.



Photo credit: Bakersfield Memorial Hospital

Recognizing the competitive nature of the current hiring environment, cultural shifts that may help alleviate staffing concerns include:

- Hire both BSN and ADN prepared nurses.
- Consider changes in care models to utilize LPNs, LVNs, others to support nurses.
- Focus on recruiting new graduate nurses and ensure their success.
- Develop relationships with schools of nursing.
- Treat agency nurses as a valuable part of the team with the goal that they become full time employees.
- Place new nurses into their desired areas of practice when possible to help retention.

Putting emphasis on a positive culture, nurse managers appreciate the opportunity to mentor young nurse leaders and find the time commitment worthwhile.



Photo credit: Mercy Medical Center

Nurse Manager Recruitment and Retention

Warshawsky shared from a pre-publication article that the estimated cost to replace nurse managers is between \$85,000 and \$141,000 (Lyle-Edrosolo, 2023), which highlights the importance of retaining every nurse manager possible. **She also highlighted ways to reduce the nurse manager work burden and promote work/life balance (Keith et al., 2020):**

- Ensure the nurse manager or front-line leader has an appropriate span of control, allowing them to effectively support, guide, manage and lead their teams, and to form close working relationships with each person reporting to them.
- Increase support staff such as dedicated educators, assistant nurse managers and administrative assistants. This support can assist with timecards, scheduling and staffing.
- Implement non-traditional work schedules, i.e. 4-day work weeks, working from home or co-manager models.
- Strategies that help nurse managers disengage from work (Available in the [Nursing Leadership Workforce Compendium](#)).

“(Nurse Managers) take on a lot more responsibilities than we should.”

– Jennifer Weger

Lindell Joseph reported some results from her [qualitative study](#) around nurse leaders' recognition (Joseph, et al, 2023):

- Nurse managers report that their work is not valued, and the reality of their job is not recognized.
- Nurse managers want to see the volume of leadership responsibilities understood by the individuals around them. Nurse managers often do not feel like they are recognized for the hard work that they do, and that C-suite executives don't understand everything that nurse managers do.
- One of the study participants realized that there was a fundamental misunderstanding of the nurse manager role, and because people were treating them like managers in traditional company structures.
 - The participant was able to redesign the position and call them directors instead of managers, which enabled them to have a salary bump.

In addition, **Joy Parchment** believes there needs to be a culture change so that nurse managers can truly get time off.



Photo credit: Cedars-Sinai Hospital

Nurse managers report that their work is not valued, and the reality of their job is not recognized.

The participants agreed that cultural and structural shifts around hiring nurses are critical to adapt to the competitive landscape and ensure the satisfaction of new nurses. A positive workplace culture is one of the most important retention factors.

Warshawsky summarized the discussion and highlighted that workplace culture and meaningful recognition are important ways to help recognize the value of the nurse manager position. Many potential avenues exist to help reduce the burden on nurse managers, and exploration to be done to create a stronger value statement or proposition for the nurse manager role.

The Expectations of the Nurse Manager Role

Think Tank participants discussed how to enact institutional change to better define the role of nurse manager:

- Audit nurse manager tasks to find and eliminate redundancies, review assigned tasks and resource properly.
- Move to a professional practice model.
- Enhance leadership development programs.

Participants reported their observations around nurse leaders' workload:

- While the list of responsibilities for front-line nurse leaders is relatively short, they are responsible for many more tasks.
- Nurse managers report that they are still working on their days off.
- Nurse managers are expected to round on patients, round on nurses on the floor, go to many meetings, touch base with all staff, complete their administrative tasks and more.
- If front-line nurses see nurse managers challenged with managing all these expectations, the front-line nurse may be less likely to want to pursue a nurse manager role.
- The group identified a need to create co-manager models or split up nurse managers' large spans of control in other ways.
- Encourage nurse managers to develop good practices early in their career around avoiding taking on too many responsibilities



Photo credit: Cedars-Sinai Hospital



The group discussed a variety of ways to address the concerns and observations discussed, including:

- Model desirable behavior to set reasonable expectations with staff, such as not emailing in the evening.
- Evaluate what parts of the nurse manager role need to be kept and which need to be given away.
- Optimize span of control.
- Socialize desired behaviors early to help teach managers to not take on too many responsibilities.

Conclusion

The nurse manager or front-line nurse leader is critical to any health care environment, and this role is often described as the most challenging role in health care. AONL's Workforce Task Force has already begun work to help support nurse managers and provide resources, tools and ideas to improve the structure of the nurse manager role for the future.

The Think Tank participants agreed that the best next step is to find opportunities to help support, enhance, and amplify the Task Force's work.



REFERENCES

American Organization for Nursing Leadership Foundation (2022). American Organization for Nursing Leadership Foundation's 2024 Longitudinal Nursing Leadership Insight Study. ([Report no. 4](#)).

Joseph, M.L., et al. (2023). Creating an Organizational Culture and Climate of Meaningful Recognition for Nurse Managers. *Journal of Nursing Administration*. 53(7/8), 370-377. doi: 10.1097/NNA.0000000000001302

Keith, A. C., Warshawsky, N., Neff, D., Loerzel, V., & Parchment, J. (2021). Factors that influence nurse manager job satisfaction: An integrated literature review. *Journal of nursing management*, 29(3), 373–384. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.13165>

Lyle-Edrosolo, G., et al. (2023). Exploration of System Chief Nurse Executive's Leadership Practices to Support, Mentor, Develop, and Retain Nurse Leaders. *Nursing Administration Quarterly*. 47(3), 269-276. doi: 10.1097/NAQ.0000000000000589

AGENDA

(All times listed in CST)

Introductions and Overview

Participants share their name, role and organization

Questions for consideration throughout our discussions today:

- What process improvements have you implemented in your organization related to recruitment, hiring, and onboarding?
 - Or, what have you used at other organizations?
 - What has worked well?
 - How do you effectively reduce nurse manager workload?
 - How do you create the business case to add more nurse managers to the system (i.e. associate nurse managers)?
 - What is the one big thing we could focus on to accelerate or amplify our results to leverage national leaders?
-

Talent Attraction and Acquisition

Nurse Manager Recruitment and Retention

Next Steps / Consensus

- What is the next step or one big thing we should focus on to improve the role of the nurse manager or front-line nurse leader?
- How do we make that happen?

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Click on the name to view the LinkedIn profile.

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To learn more about the Think Tank Programs,
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