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Special Edition

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

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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.

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