



HEALTH POLICY AND SYSTEMS

Retaining Nurses and Other Hospital Workers: An Intergenerational Perspective of the Work Climate

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Abstract

Purpose: This article describes and compares work climate perceptions and intentions to quit among three generations of hospital workers and nurses.

Background: Never before in history has the workplace comprised such a span of generations. The current workforce includes three main generations: Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1963), Generation X (born between 1964 and 1980), and Generation Y (born between 1981 and 2000). However, very little research has linked turnover among nurses and other healthcare workers to their generational profile.

Method: A quantitative study with a correlational descriptive design was used. 1,376 hospital workers of the three generations (with 42.1% nurses, 15.6% support staff, 20.1% office employees, and 22.1% health professionals or technicians), employed in a university-affiliated hospital, completed a self-administered questionnaire. They answered the Psychological Climate Questionnaire and a measure of turnover intention.

Results: Generation Y hospital workers obtained a significantly lower score on the “Challenge” scale than did Baby Boomers. On the “Absence of Conflict” and “Warmth” scales, the opposite occurred, with Baby Boomers obtaining a significantly lower score than Generation Y respondents. If the nurse job category is taken separately, Generation Y nurses expressed a negative perception of the “Goal Emphasis” scale, compared with Baby Boomers. The proportion of Generation Y nurses who intend to quit is almost three times higher than that of other hospital workers from Generation Y. The main reason given by workers from Generations Y and X who intend to quit the organization is their own career advancement. The main reason given by Baby Boomers who intend to quit is retirement.

Conclusions: Retention strategies that focus on improving the work climate are beneficial to all generations of hospital workers and nurses. If generation-specific retention strategies are developed, these should focus on the three areas identified to have intergenerational differences: challenges, absence of conflict, and warmth.

Clinical Relevance: New nurses will benefit from strategies aimed at supporting their career advancement in the workplace.

Never before in history has the workplace comprised such a span of generations (Glass, 2007). The composition of today's nursing workforce spans four generations, each with unique work habits, beliefs, and attitudes (Goldman & Schmalz, 2006). Knowledge of the background and characteristics of each generation can help in the identification of unique talents and drawbacks that each generation brings to the work environment. Managers are faced with new challenges as they try to find innovative strategies to recruit and retain employees. In the health-care sector, managers struggle to recruit and retain new nurses from Generation Y. This challenge is magnified for managers as the demand for healthcare increases with an aging population. Very little research has linked turnover among nurses and other healthcare workers to their generational profile. Very little is known about the reasons why healthcare workers and nurses from different generations want to leave their organizations. Some managers believe that retention strategies are beneficial in all circumstances. However, generation-specific strategies may be more efficacious. Managers need to recognize generational differences and consider the intergenerational perspective in assessing the work climate and the employees' intention to stay.

Background

Intergenerational Workforce

The current workforce includes three main generations. These generations are Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1963), Generation X (born between 1964 and 1980), and Generation Y (born between 1981 and 2000; Duchscher & Cowin, 2004).

Baby boomers. Members of this generation define themselves by their work (Greene, 2005). They are driven by competition and material rewards, always willing to go "the extra mile" and work overtime. They are hard workers, service oriented, and seek to please. They may also be sensitive to feedback and judgmental of those who see things differently.

Generation X. In the workplace, members of this generation are often less loyal, more skeptical, fiercely independent, and energetic (Apostolidis & Polifroni, 2006; Glass, 2007; Hu, Herrick, & Hudgin, 2004). Kyles (2005) stated that opportunity and autonomy are the ultimate corporate rewards for Generation X. In contrast to the Baby Boomer generation, "Gen Xers" generally do not define themselves by their work: their occupation is more often just one aspect of their identity (Jovic, Wallace, & Lemaire, 2006). For example, Generation X may pick a lower-paying job if it offers less stringent working hours and allows for a better work-life balance (Glass).

They seek opportunities to learn on the job and attach significance to self-improvement (Glass). They view jobs as temporary and value opportunities for learning and training, instead of loyalty and pension plans (Apostolidis & Polifroni). Some motivators for Generation X are recognition and praise, opportunities to learn new things, individual time with managers, and high stimulation.

Generation Y. The emerging generation entering the nursing workforce is Generation Y. Occasionally viewed as the "younger portion" of Generation X, analysis shows that Generation Y differs greatly (Glass, 2007). Strictly in terms of size, which has been estimated at 81 million (Altimier, 2006), Generation Y is the most influential generation since the Baby Boomers (Shih & Allen, 2006). Generation Y can be characterized as a generation that is high maintenance but provides high productivity (Martin, 2005). Like Generation X, they desire jobs with flexibility, seeing work as only one facet of their lives (Bosco & Bianco, 2005; Giroux, 2001): they want to be able to telecommute, work part time, and leave the workforce temporarily to have children and raise a family (Bell & Narz, 2007). However, they will fully engage in their work if they believe in the outcome of their work and the organizational values (Erickson, 2009). In the workplace, this generation seeks frequent feedback (Wieck, Prydun, & Walsh, 2002) and leaders who are nurturing and supportive (Wieck, 2003). This tech-savvy group is the first generation of "digital natives" (Skiba, 2003). Generation Y wants to work in organizations that have fast-track leadership programs and where contributions are recognized and rewarded (Glass, 2007). Having grown up in an era of downsizing, Generation Y thinks job security is a myth, and thus places more importance on building and marketing their skills (Bova & Kroth, 2001; Giroux; Loughlin & Barling, 2001). Choosing and staying at a job can often be dependent on the amount of training available (Altimier).

Work Climate

Similar to intergenerational characteristics, work climate also has the potential to influence recruitment and retention of workers. Not only does the quality of the healthcare work environment impact the effectiveness of healthcare services, it also impacts provider outcomes such as job satisfaction and turnover rates (Canadian Council of Healthcare Services Accreditation, 2007). Positive perception of the psychological work climate increases job satisfaction, organizational commitment, motivation, and productivity (Parker et al., 2003). It also contributes to decreased absenteeism, turnover rates, and nurses' overtime (Berney & Needleman, 2006;

Ceria, 1992; Gellatly, 1995; Rogers, Hwang, Scott, Aiken, & Dinges, 2004; Shamian, O'Brien-Pallas, Thomson, Alksnis, & Kerr, 2003; Washington, 2001). Therefore, improving the nursing work environment can be a strategy to decrease nursing turnover (Hayes et al., 2006). According to Gagnon, Paquet, Courcy, and Parker (2009), variations in hospital medication errors are partly linked in terms of psychosocial work climate to variations in perceptions related to the clarity, role conflict, and overload. They found that variations in mean length of stay are partly linked to variations in the perceptions related to job autonomy, job importance, job challenge, role clarity, role conflict and overload (Gagnon, Paquet, Lavoie-Tremblay, & Courcy, 2008).

Therefore, it is not surprising that for many years, healthier work environments have been a priority for Health Canada. In the third joint national consultation to determine priorities in health services that are responsive to critical issues in the organization and management of Canadian healthcare systems, the theme of work environment topped the list out of the 11 themes that emerged. The workforce and the work environment are areas with the highest priority of concern to decision makers across Canada (Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, 2008). This Canada-wide consultation resulted in a common call for strategies to better employ existing healthcare providers and to create and sustain health workforce and work environments.

Turnover

Turnover is an important issue in the context of the shortage of nurses and other health professionals. Not only is recruitment of nurse and healthcare workers a concern, but so is retaining the workers in the workforce and reducing their intention to quit. Factors contributing to the nurses' current high turnover rate include the stressful nature of their working conditions, which leads to burnout and job dissatisfaction (Laschinger, 2007). The Canadian Nurses Association report (2000) showed that many new nurses are leaving their jobs within 2 years after graduation. We know little about how this new generation of nurses perceives their work environment and why they have such a high turnover rate (Lavoie-Tremblay, O'Brien-Pallas, Gelinias, Desforges, & Marchionni, 2008). For each generation currently in the workforce, it is essential to know the factors that influence their intention to quit and thereby create strategies aiming at retaining them in the workforce. Apostolidis and Polifroni (2006) state that the reason why different generations may want to leave the workforce lays in their different work values.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the intergenerational perspective of the work climate. This article describes and compares work climate perception and intention to quit among three generations of hospital workers and nurses.

Methods

Design and Participants

We used a quantitative study with a correlational descriptive design. Participants included all hospital workers employed in a university-affiliated healthcare center in the Province of Quebec, Canada.

Data Collection

The Psychological Climate Questionnaire ((in French, Centre de recherche et d'intervention en santé des organisations [CRISOPCQ]) CRISO-PCQ) was developed by Gagnon et al. (2009) developed based on the framework initially proposed by Jones and James (1979). This framework organizes dimensions of psychological climate according to situational referents related to one's job, role, leader, work group, and organization (James & James, 1989; James & Sells, 1981). The measurement of work climate was done using the CRISO-PCQ. This questionnaire consists of 60 items organized according to 15 scales and five theoretical dimensions. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale with anchors ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The neutral midpoint of the scale is 3; therefore, a scale that is scored higher than 3 is considered to be viewed positively as the respondent agrees with the statement. For this study, we obtained reliability coefficients that ranged from 0.75 to 0.95. More information on the validity and reliability of the questionnaire is available in the Gagnon et al. article.

In addition to the measure of work climate, an individual's turnover intention was measured using a single, dichotomous question (intention to quit or stay in the organization). For the respondents who indicated their intention to quit, a second question was asked to identify the reason that motivates their desire to leave (14 answer choices were given). Also, sociodemographic data were collected from all participants. Participants were asked to report their age, gender, and job category.

In 2008, the questionnaire was distributed in French to each manager. The managers, in turn, were responsible for distributing the questionnaire to their employees. The respondents had 4 weeks to return the survey

directly to the research group, using a postage-paid envelope. A reminder was sent to the managers 3 weeks after the questionnaire was distributed.

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the organization's institutional review board. All respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary and anonymous, and that responses would only be reported in aggregates. Consent to participate was assumed by the respondents' choice to complete the survey and mail it back to the researchers. All data gathered from the returned surveys were coded into a database by an external firm specializing in data entry.

Data Analysis

First, we chose to evaluate if there were significant differences between age groups and intent to quit or stay groups on the 15 work climate scales. Since the scales, which act as dependent variables, are related, multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) were conducted. This procedure is appropriate with moderately correlated dependent variables and has the advantage of reducing Type I error, compared with multiple univariate comparisons. We also performed cross-tabulations with χ^2 tests to evaluate the association between age groups and turnover intention. All the analyses were conducted using SPSS 17 (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL).

Results

The sample was collected in March 2008 ($n = 1,324$) and was composed of healthcare and hospital workers employed in a university-affiliated healthcare center in the province of Quebec, Canada. Out of 4,135 potential respondents, 1,376 returned their questionnaire, for a 34.7% response rate. A total of 52 respondents were eliminated as they did not indicate their age, thereby omitting which generation they belonged to. Of the 1,324 participants, the majority were female ($n = 1,080$; 81.6%). A total of 614 employees (46.4%) were members of the Baby Boomer generation, between 45 and 63 years of age. A total of 468 participants were between 29 and 44 years old (35.3%), thereby making them members of Generation X. A total of 242 participants were 29 years old or younger (18.3%), members of Generation Y. In terms of job category, 42.1% ($n = 558$) were nursing staff, and the remaining 57.9% ($n = 766$) were categorized as "other hospital workers" for the purpose of this research. To be more precise, this category actually includes support staff ($n = 207$; 15.6%), office staff ($n =$

Table 1. Contingency Analyses Between Generations and Intent to Quit the Organization, for All Respondents and by Job Categories

Age groups	Intent to quit		Intent to stay		χ^2	df
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%		
Overall sample						
Generation Y	24	17.1%	116	82.9%	5.41*	2
Generation X	53	19.0%	226	81.0%		
Baby Boomers	60	12.8%	407	87.2%		
Nursing staff						
Generation Y	14	29.8%	33	70.2%	5.64*	2
Generation X	21	17.1%	102	82.9%		
Baby Boomers	30	15.2%	168	84.8%		
Other job categories						
Generation Y	10	10.8%	83	89.2%	8.17**	2
Generation X	32	20.5%	124	79.5%		
Baby Boomers	30	11.2%	239	88.8%		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

266; 20.1%), and health professionals or technicians ($n = 293$; 22.1%).

Comparison of Intention to Quit Compared Among Three Generations

The intention to quit for the overall sample is 15.5% ($n = 137$). Within this number, 47.4% ($n = 65$) are nurses and 52.6% ($n = 72$) are other hospital workers. The χ^2 analyses between age groups and turnover intentions were conducted for the whole sample and for nursing staff and other job titles. Significant relationships were found. The proportion of respondents from Generation Y or Generation X who intend to quit the organization is higher than for the Baby Boomers. When the nurses' job category is considered separately, the proportion of Generation Y nurses who want to quit is almost triple (29.8%) the rate for "other hospital workers" (10.8%; **Table 1**).

A first one-way MANOVA was conducted to compare the intention to quit among each of the work climate scales. Prerequisites for the analysis were met. Significant differences were found among the two intent to quit-stay groups on the dependent measures [Wilks' $\lambda = .864$, $F(15,870) = 9.16$, $p < .001$].

Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) for each dependent variable were conducted as follow-up tests to the MANOVA, using the Bonferroni method for controlling Type I error rates for multiple comparisons. Among the 15 scales, they all showed significant statistical differences among intent to quit or stay groups, except the "Challenge" scale (**Table 2**). Thus, respondents who intend to quit the organization perceived 14 out of the

Table 2. Analyses of Variance Between Intent to Quit-Stay Groups for Each Work Climate Scale

Scales	Intent to quit		Intent to stay		F
	M	SD	M	SD	
Job					
Importance	3.98	0.69	4.16	0.57	10.39*
Autonomy	3.37	0.86	3.74	0.73	28.19**
Challenge	3.94	0.83	4.04	0.62	2.65
Role					
Clarity	2.98	0.94	3.62	0.76	77.59**
Absence					
Conflict	3.01	0.91	3.57	0.84	49.85**
Workload	2.34	1.05	2.89	1.01	34.51**
Leadership					
Trust and support	2.65	1.13	3.46	1.00	73.36**
Goal emphasis	2.66	0.90	3.28	0.81	64.99**
Work facilitation	2.52	0.98	3.15	0.89	57.27**
Work group					
Warmth	3.12	1.11	3.58	0.93	26.54**
Pride	2.80	0.94	3.46	0.86	65.21**
Cooperation	3.15	1.04	3.55	0.88	22.61**
Organization					
Innovation	2.31	0.87	2.96	0.83	69.79**
Justice	2.34	0.87	3.01	0.89	67.16**
Support	1.96	0.84	2.70	0.99	67.82**

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

15 work climate scales significantly more negatively than their colleagues who intend to stay. The same results are obtained when considering only nurse respondents. The main reason given by nurses and other hospital workers from Generations Y and X intending to quit the organization is career advancement/development, while for Baby Boomers the main reason is retirement.

Comparison of Work Climate Perception Among Three Generations

A one-way MANOVA was conducted to evaluate difference in work climate perceptions of the three generation groups. Prerequisites for the analysis were met. Significant differences were found among the three groups on the dependent measures [Wilks' $\lambda = .95$, $F(30,2614) = 2.46$, $p < .001$].

Univariate ANOVAs for each dependent variable were conducted as follow-up tests to the MANOVA, using the Bonferroni method for controlling Type I error rates for multiple comparisons. Among the 15 scales, three showed significant statistical differences among generations. On the "Challenge" scale [$F(2,1321) = 5.30$, $p = .005$], Generation Y respondents ($M = 3.88$; $SD = 0.73$) obtained a significantly lower score than did Baby

Boomers ($M = 4.04$; $SD = 0.62$). On the "Absence of Conflict" scale [$F(2,1321) = 3.14$, $p = .044$], the opposite occurred, where Baby Boomers ($M = 3.31$; $SD = 0.88$) obtained a significantly lower score than did respondents from Generation Y ($M = 3.48$; $SD = 0.87$). The same goes for the "Warmth" scale [$F(2,1321) = 3.72$, $p = .025$]; Baby Boomers ($M = 3.30$; $SD = 1.01$) obtained a significantly lower score than did Generation Y respondents ($M = 3.49$; $SD = 1.02$). For each of these three analyses, Generation X obtained a score similar to those of both Generation Y and the Baby Boomers.

The same analysis was conducted with the nurse's job category taken separately. No significant differences were found among the three groups on the dependent measures [Wilks' $\lambda = .93$, $F(30,1082) = 1.28$, $p = .147$]. However, one scale showed significant differences between generations when submitted to follow-up ANOVAs. Respondents from Generation Y ($M = 2.90$; $SD = 0.85$) manifested a negative perception of the "Goal Emphasis" scale [$F(2,1321) = 3.14$, $p = .044$], compared with the positive perception of the Baby Boomers ($M = 3.6$; $SD = 0.87$). Again, Generation X obtained a score to those of both Generation Y and the Baby Boomers.

Discussion

The importance of work climate and its impact on retention of hospital workers and nurses cannot be overlooked. This study identifies three areas in the measurement of work climate that differ significantly across the generations of hospital workers: "Challenges," "Absence of Conflict," and "Warmth." When analyzing the subgroup of nurse respondents, only the "Goal Emphasis" work climate scale differs significantly among the different generations of nurses.

The "Challenge" scale of the work climate questionnaire refers to a work environment that allows for the use of a variety of competencies and knowledge. Generation Y respondents have a positive view of challenges, but less positive than Baby Boomer generation respondents. In other words, Generation Y respondents felt that their work environment allowed them to make full use of their skills, but not as much as Baby Boomer respondents felt this to be true. Even though Generation Y respondents viewed the "Challenge" scale positively, their work environment has room to be more challenging. This finding reflects the literature on characteristics of Generation Y workers who are looking for a workplace that provides them with more opportunities for professional growth and development along with ongoing challenges. Greene (2005) stated that Generation Y nurses are regularly unsatisfied with the lack of opportunities for new challenges

leading to their professional development. Generation Y workers view their employment as part of their life-long learning, expecting to be placed in challenging situations where they can further their education and skills (Duch-scher & Cowin, 2004).

In contrast to the “Challenge” scale results, Baby Boomers obtained a significantly lower score than did respondents from Generation Y in the “Absence of Conflict” scale. However, both scores are viewed positively. In other words, the absence of conflict is perceived positively when respondents feel that the workplace rules and regulations as well as the people they work with do not interfere with their work. Even though Baby Boomers positively perceived the absence of conflict, they still perceived more conflict in the workplace than did Generation Y workers. This result can be explained with the idea that Generation Y workers, being new to the workforce, expect to have rules and managers telling them what to do and interfering with their job. These interactions are not viewed as conflict by Generation Y workers, who seek frequent feedback (Wieck et al., 2002) and leaders who are nurturing and supportive (Wieck, 2003). Generation Y nurses expect to be contributing members of the interdisciplinary decision-making team, to be listened to, and to be treated with respect (Carver & Candela, 2008; Greene, 2005). While these are characteristics that may lead to an increased perception of conflict in the workplace, Generation Y workers are known for choosing their own bosses (Goldman & Schmalz, 2006) and having little loyalty to their employment. Job hopping is an acceptable method of career advancement, and they thus will leave the organization before conflicts become perceived as stressful. When Generation Y workers choose to stay in a more stressful position, it is because of their hardiness (Whitmer, Hurst, & Prins, 2009) and high tolerance of diversity (Downing, 2006).

Similarly to the “Absence of Conflict” scale, Baby Boomers obtained a significantly lower score than did respondents from Generation Y on the “Warmth” scale. Both Baby Boomers and Generation Y respondents perceived their workplace as having a friendly atmosphere, being in a supportive environment, and having people on their team who are concerned about one another. However, Generation Y respondents agreed more strongly with these statements than did Baby Boomers. This may be explained by the fact that Baby Boomers prefer working as individuals and equate their work with self-worth (Cordeniz, 2002). They do not seek a team-based, collaborative approach as a Generation Y worker would (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Downing, 2006). Generation Y workers are characterized in the literature as appreciating teamwork (Carver & Candela, 2008; Whitmer, Hurst, & Prins, 2009), being inherently social (Skiba, 2003), and

seeking a sense of community among their colleagues (Jamieson, 2009), thereby explaining why they had a more positive view of the “Warmth” scale.

The “Goal Emphasis” work climate scale was the only scale to have a statistically significant difference between generations of the nursing subgroup of respondents. This difference was found among Generation Y nurses and Baby Boomers. Generation Y nurses have a negative perception of the “Goal Emphasis” scale, compared with the positive perception of the Baby Boomers. Generation Y nurses perceived goals and objectives as not being clearly stated, and they did not feel that their managers set precise goals or that the team had measurable goals. In the literature, Generation Y nurses value feedback and goal setting. They need to know that the organization’s goals meet their personal goals. They are globally aware and want to make sure that the organization’s goals are for a greater good (Whitmer et al., 2009). For example, 91.7% of nurses under the age of 32 (Generation Y), were dissatisfied that their organization did not focus on the patients’ needs (Greene, 2005). This source of dissatisfaction was not mentioned by nurses in other age groups (Greene). On the other hand, Baby Boomers perceived the scale of “Goal Emphasis” positively. This may be explained by the fact that Baby Boomer nurses have been in the field for many years already and are used to the organizational structures and procedures.

Intention to Quit and Reason for Quitting

In light of the present nursing shortage, it is interesting that our results show the proportion of nurse respondents from Generation Y who intend to quit is almost triple that of other hospital worker respondents from the same generation. This finding is in line with the literature that states that being a new nurse in the current work environment is challenging (Schoessler & Waldo, 2006). New nurses (mostly from Generation Y) are expected to become competent in their area quickly and to carry a large workload in the midst of a nursing shortage. Therefore, it is not surprising that new nurses are constantly being confronted with situations for which they feel unprepared, leading to higher work-related stress, higher job dissatisfaction, and higher intention to quit (Coomber & Barriball, 2007; Irvine & Evans, 1995; Lavoie-Tremblay, Leclerc, Marchionni, & Drevnick, 2010; Shader, Broome, Broome, West, & Nash, 2001; Strachota, Normandin, O’Brien, Clary, & Krukow, 2003; Taunton, Boyle, Woods, Hanse, & Bott, 1997).

Hospital workers and nurses who intend to quit the organization also had a significantly more negative perception of 14 of the 15 work climate scales, compared with their colleagues who intend to stay. This finding

links intention to stay in nursing to the nurses' work climate. Similarly, in the literature, Hayes et al. (2006) also found that nursing work environment is linked to turnover. Kupperschmidt (2006) also found that a lack of cutting edge technology and poor conditions in acute care settings are possible reasons for nurses to leave their jobs. The main reason for the intention to quit reported by hospital workers and nurses from Generations X and Y was career advancement-development. The main reason for Baby Boomers was retirement. As discussed above, Generation Y and, to some extent, Generation X value the development of their skill set more than moving up the corporate ladder. It is therefore not surprising that all respondents from these two generations will leave their current positions to advance their skill set. It was also found that Generation Y nurses will leave their current jobs for a better work schedule and more flexible hours. In a study looking at expectation and needs of new nurses (mostly Generation Y), Lavoie-Tremblay et al. (2010) found that new nurses will choose a work environment that best meets their learning needs with long-term supervision and regular feedback.

Strategies for Retaining Healthcare Workers and Nurses

It has been suggested in the literature that assessment of different generations represented in the work environment may provide clues as to how to provide a supportive work environment (Stuenkel, de la Cuesta, & Cohen, 2005). Different generations have different expectations regarding employment demands, need for orientation and training, need for advancement, benefits, and retirement options (Hu et al., 2004). Even though managers may capitalize on unique characteristics of each generation, this study found that creating a healthy work environment is a strategy that fosters retention of all healthcare workers, regardless of their generation. If generation-specific retention strategies are developed, these should focus on the three areas identified to have intergenerational differences: challenges, absence of conflict, and warmth. For nurses from Generation Y, a specific retention strategy for managers is to clearly state measurable goals and objectives for the team and to give ongoing feedback. Specific attention needs to be placed on strategies to retain new nurses as their intention to quit is triple that of any other generation of hospital workers. The number one reason these nurses gave for their intention to quit was to continue their education and professional development. Therefore, a key solution to retaining these new nurses is to provide for their ongoing education within their work environment. This strategy is in line with strategies that promote magnet

hospital characteristics (Kramer & Schmalenberg, 2001), which include providing educational and career support; allocating time and financial support for educational advancement, research, special projects, and publications; encouraging the participation of nurses in reviewing, updating, and initiating policies and procedures founded on evidence-based practice and research; and improving work climate, which results in facilitating positive outcomes for nurses, leading to less turnover and intention to quit.

Study Limitations

The study was limited by a small sample for each generation who intend to quit. It would be pertinent to replicate this study with a larger sample that includes nurses from different organizations and geographical jurisdictions outside North America. This limited the analysis based on generational differences.

Conclusions

This study compared work climate perception and intention to quit among three of the four generations of healthcare and hospital workers, as well as among three generations of nurses. We conclude that work climate is generally perceived the same way by all generations of respondents, with only 3 of the 15 scales having a significant difference. Similarly, among nurse respondents, work climate is perceived the same, aside from 1 of the 15 scales. Although a situation may be enhanced by looking at it through a generational lens, we found that this is not the case for work climate. Retention strategies that are generation specific may be beneficial; however, general retention strategies that focus on improving the work climate will apply to all generations of hospital workers.

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Clinical Resources

- Quality Worklife Quality Healthcare Collaborative: <http://www.qwqhc.ca/>
- Research and Intervention Centre for Healthy Workplaces: <http://www.criso.ca/default.aspx?NavID=1&CultureCode=en-CA>

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