“I can’t get no satisfaction.” Even though this phrase was made famous by the Rolling Stones, it certainly seemed to be the overriding feeling of many unhappy nurses over the past decade. Nurses have been increasingly dissatisfied with the profession. That trend seems to be changing according to recent polls. The 2004 National Survey of Registered Nurses indicates a high level of satisfaction with nursing as a career and with current jobs (Buerhaus et al., 2005a). This survey shows an increasing number of nurses are satisfied with the nursing profession. Almost nine out of ten nurses reported satisfaction with nursing as a career.

Another survey from the American Nurses Association (ANA, 2005) also reported that nearly two-thirds of respondents reported satisfaction with their nursing jobs. Even in the face of today’s nursing shortage, nursing job satisfaction seems to be improving. Nurses today are more satisfied with the profession and their current jobs. Not only are nurses more satisfied with nursing in recent years, but they are also more likely to recommend nursing as a career (Buerhaus et al., 2005a). Nursing job satisfaction is an essential component to retaining nurses and resolving the nursing shortage.

What Does it Take to Be Satisfied In the Nursing Profession?

According to an ANA (2005) satisfaction survey, nurses were most satisfied with certain aspects of their job. The aspects that received the highest level of satisfaction were the interactions with other nurses, professional status, and career development opportunities. Nurses related satisfaction with the profession to connectedness with other staff and patients. Nurses want and need to be able to give quality patient care and to develop strong relationships with others in the profession.

There are many factors that influence professional job satisfaction. Part of the solution to increasing nursing job satisfaction involves enhancing relationships with other nurses through team building and mentoring programs to connect novice nurses with nursing expert clinicians. DiMeglio et al. (2005) identified group cohesion through team building as a factor in improving nurse job satisfaction. Kuhl (2005) described effective mentoring as allowing both partners in the mentoring program the opportunity for professional growth and improved job satisfaction. Not only are relationships with colleagues important to nurse job satisfaction, but also connectedness to patients and the ability to provide quality patient care influence nursing job satisfaction (Albaugh, 2003). Appropriate staffing allows nurses to provide safe, quality care and thereby improves nursing job satisfaction (Schiff, 2002). Nurses still continue to identify improving the work environment as improving satisfaction and the most important solution to resolving the nursing shortage (Buerhaus, Donelan, Ulrich, Norman, & Dittus, 2005b). Other aspects of a nurse’s job that contribute to job satisfaction are working for managers who recognize the importance of a nurse’s personal life and family, job security, time off, and benefits.

Despite all the problems nurses are facing today, it truly seems that we can “get satisfaction.” If nurses continue to work with professional organizations, legislators, and employers on workplace issues and build strong relationships among health care team members and between nurses and patients, there seems to be great hope for improved professional job satisfaction for the future. It is essential that nurses continue to mentor and nurture co-workers, while enhancing quality patient care to preserve this great profession. It’s time for nurses to find a new song. As the public’s most trusted profession, maybe it’s time for a little “R-E-S-P-E-C-T.”

References


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