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Research – White Paper

Addressing the Shortage of Caregivers for the Aging Population in the United States

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Date: July 15, 2023

Objective:

The Smart Development Institute (SDI), a certified IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit firm, bridges communities via collaboration and communication, to improve the quality of life of the citizens of communities. The research paper aims to understand the challenges of lack of caregivers for the aging population in the United States and explores how to expand or further leverage the skills and expertise of Filipino healthcare professionals to help address these expanding challenges.

Understanding Shortage of Caregivers in the United States

The United States is experiencing a significant demographic shift, with the baby boomer generation reaching retirement age and beyond.

Some 17 percent of people living in the United States, or more than 1 in 6, were 65 or older in 2020, according to a report from the Administration on Aging. That represents 55.7 million people, an increase of 15.2 million (38 percent) of people 65 and above since 2010, compared with just 2 percent growth in the under-65 population. It also reflects a consistent increase in the nation's older population since 1900, when there were 3.1 million Americans 65 and older (4 percent of the population).

The report projects a climb to roughly 80.8 million residents 65 and older by 2040, more than double the number in 2000. It also predicts a doubling of the number of even older residents by 2040, with the count of those 85 and older expected to grow from 6.7 million in 2020 to 14.4 million by 2040. In 2020, there were nearly 105,000 residents 100 or older.

As this population segment grows older, there is a greater demand for healthcare services and long-term care. However, the supply of qualified caregivers and nurses is not keeping pace with this demand. The demand for caregivers and nurses in long-term care facilities, nursing homes, and home healthcare settings exceeds the available supply. This results in increased workloads for existing staff, compromised patient care, and challenges in meeting the diverse needs of the aging population.

This shortage is prevalent across different healthcare settings, including long-term care facilities, nursing homes, and home healthcare. It is further exacerbated by factors such as an aging nursing workforce, limited nursing faculty to educate new nurses, and competition for healthcare professionals from other sectors.

The aging population typically requires more medical attention, chronic disease management, and assistance with activities of daily living. This places a strain on the healthcare system and necessitates a larger number of caregivers and nurses to meet the demand.

Especially when COVID-19 hit the world, the pandemic highlighted and exacerbated the existing shortage of healthcare workers, including nurses, physicians, and other essential healthcare staff. The shortage of healthcare workers is particularly acute in rural and underserved areas, where there are often fewer healthcare facilities and resources. It is also more pronounced in certain specialties, such as primary care, mental health, and geriatrics. Additionally, there is a shortage of nursing faculty, which makes it difficult to train and educate new nurses to fill the growing demand.

The shortage of caregivers and nurses can have serious implications for the quality of care provided to the aging population. It can lead to increased healthcare costs, longer wait times, compromised patient safety, and caregiver burnout.

The Potential Implications of the Shortage of Caregivers/Nurses for the Aging population

The shortage of caregivers and nurses for the aging population can have several significant implications:

1. **Patient Care**: The shortage can compromise the quality and continuity of patient care for older adults. Insufficient staffing levels may lead to reduced time and attention given to each patient, increased workload for caregivers and nurses, and limited availability of specialized services. This can result in delayed responses to patient needs, decreased monitoring of health conditions, and a higher risk of medical errors or neglect.
2. **Healthcare Costs**: The shortage can contribute to increased healthcare costs. With limited caregivers and nurses available to provide care, healthcare facilities may need to pay higher wages to attract and retain professionals. These increased costs can be passed on to patients, families, or insurance providers, leading to higher healthcare expenses for the aging population.
3. **Caregiver Well-being**: The shortage places a heavy burden on existing caregivers and nurses, potentially leading to burnout, increased stress levels, and job dissatisfaction. Caregivers may be required to work longer hours, take on heavier workloads, and experience difficulties balancing their personal lives with work responsibilities. This can negatively impact their mental and physical well-being, ultimately affecting the quality of care they provide to the aging population.

4. Caregiver Shortage Cascade: The shortage of caregivers and nurses can create a cascade effect. As the workload increases and job satisfaction decreases, fewer individuals may be attracted to the caregiving profession. This can further exacerbate the shortage, making it increasingly challenging to meet the growing demands of the aging population.
5. Family and Informal Caregiver Strain: When professional caregivers are in short supply, the burden of care often falls on family members and informal caregivers. This can lead to increased stress, financial strain, and reduced quality of life for these individuals. Family caregivers may need to juggle multiple responsibilities, impacting their own health and well-being.

Addressing the shortage of caregivers and nurses for the aging population is crucial to mitigate these implications. It requires comprehensive strategies such as increasing the recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals, improving working conditions, providing support services for caregivers, and exploring technological innovations to enhance care delivery and efficiency.

One potential approach is to expand or further leverage the skills and expertise of Filipino Healthcare Professionals for addressing the shortage of caregivers and nurses in the United States. The following sections discuss the benefits, challenges, and proposed interventions to pursue this approach.

Leveraging Filipino Healthcare Professionals for Addressing Shortage of Healthcare Workers in the United States

The deployment of Filipino healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, in the United States continues to be significant in the present day.

Filipino nurses remain a substantial part of the U.S. nursing workforce. According to data from the Migration Policy Institute, as of 2020, approximately 20% of the nursing workforce in the United States consisted of Filipino nurses. This indicates a significant representation of Filipino nurses in the U.S. healthcare workplace. They continue to play a vital role in addressing nursing shortages and providing essential care to diverse patient populations across various healthcare settings.

Beyond nursing, there is also a notable presence of Filipino healthcare professionals in other roles such as physicians, therapists, technicians, and healthcare administrators.

Filipino nurses, in particular, play a significant role in alleviating the shortage of healthcare workers for the aging population in the United States through various ways:

1. Meeting the Demand: Filipino nurses can fill critical positions in hospitals, long-term care facilities, nursing homes, and home healthcare settings, where the aging population often requires specialized care and attention. Their clinical expertise, training, and experience in geriatric care make them valuable assets in meeting the

increasing demand for caregivers and nurses.

2. Cultural Competence: Filipino nurses have a natural advantage in providing culturally competent care to the aging population. They often have a deep respect for and understanding of the values, traditions, and cultural nuances of older adults, allowing for effective communication, empathy, and person-centered care.
3. Language Proficiency: Filipino nurses are typically fluent in English, which is a significant advantage when caring for the aging population, many of whom may have communication challenges. Their language skills enable effective communication with patients, their families, and the interdisciplinary healthcare team.
4. Compassionate Care: Filipino nurses are known for their compassionate and holistic approach to patient care. They prioritize the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of the individuals they care for, which is particularly valuable when addressing the complex needs and challenges faced by the aging population.
5. Geriatric Care Expertise: In the Philippines, where a significant portion of the population is elderly, Filipino nurses often receive specialized training in geriatric care. They are equipped with knowledge and skills in managing age-related health conditions, promoting functional independence, and providing comprehensive care tailored to the unique needs of older adults.

To fully leverage the contributions of Filipino nurses in alleviating the shortage of healthcare workers for the aging population, it is essential to ensure their recruitment, integration, and professional development. This includes streamlining the immigration process, recognizing international credentials, providing mentorship and support networks, and offering opportunities for continuing education and career advancement.

What Should be Considered to Recruit and Retain More Filipino Healthcare Workers to Address Shortage in the United States?

U.S. healthcare organizations actively recruit Filipino nurses to address staffing shortages and meet the increasing demand for healthcare services. The Philippines has a long history of exporting healthcare professionals, including nurses, to various countries, with the U.S. being a primary destination. U.S. immigration policies, such as the H-1B visa program and employment-based immigrant visas, facilitate the recruitment and employment of internationally educated healthcare professionals, including Filipinos.

To recruit and retain Filipino healthcare workers effectively to address the shortage of caregivers for the aging population in the United States, several key factors should be considered. Here are some requirements and strategies to effectively recruit and retain Filipino healthcare workers:

1. Targeted Recruitment Efforts: Implement targeted recruitment campaigns in the Philippines to attract Filipino healthcare workers. This includes partnering with

- reputable recruitment agencies, attending job fairs, and utilizing online platforms to reach potential candidates. Highlight the benefits, career opportunities, and support available to caregivers working with the aging population in the United States.
2. Competitive Compensation and Benefits: Offer competitive compensation packages and attractive benefits to Filipino healthcare workers. This includes competitive salaries, health insurance coverage, retirement plans, and opportunities for career advancement. Providing financial incentives, such as signing bonuses or relocation assistance, can also be effective in attracting and retaining top talent.
 3. Educational and Professional Development Opportunities: Provide educational and professional development opportunities for Filipino healthcare workers. Offer continuing education programs, training workshops, and certifications to enhance their skills in geriatric care, dementia management, and other specialized areas related to caring for the aging population. This investment in their professional growth can help retain and motivate Filipino caregivers.
 4. Supportive Work Environment: Create a supportive work environment that recognizes the unique challenges and rewards of caregiving for the aging population. Foster a culture of appreciation, work-life balance, and employee well-being. Provide resources, counseling services, and mentorship programs to support the mental and emotional well-being of Filipino healthcare workers.
 5. Cultural Competence and Sensitivity: Recognize and appreciate the cultural background and diversity of Filipino healthcare workers. Implement cultural competence training programs to enhance their understanding of the aging population's cultural norms, values, and preferences. Foster an inclusive and supportive environment that embraces diversity and promotes respectful care practices.
 6. Workforce Integration and Community Support: Facilitate the integration of Filipino healthcare workers into the local communities where they work. Provide resources and support networks to help them connect with fellow caregivers and Filipino communities. This can help mitigate feelings of isolation and enhance job satisfaction and retention.
 7. Transparent Recruitment and Ethical Practices: Ensure transparent and ethical recruitment practices that protect the rights and welfare of Filipino healthcare workers. Collaborate with reputable recruitment agencies that adhere to ethical standards and avoid excessive fees or exploitative practices. Clear communication, fair contracts, and a commitment to maintaining positive employer-employee relationships are essential.

8. **Opportunities for Career Advancement:** Provide opportunities for career advancement and growth within the organization. Offer pathways for Filipino healthcare workers to take on leadership roles, become mentors, or pursue specialized areas of interest. This can enhance job satisfaction and retention by recognizing their skills and providing avenues for professional development.

Addressing the shortage of caregivers for the aging population requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates recruitment, retention, and support strategies. By implementing these requirements and strategies, healthcare organizations can effectively recruit and retain Filipino healthcare workers to meet the growing demand for caregivers in the United States.

The Current Challenges of Bringing Filipino Healthcare Workers to the United States

While bringing Filipino healthcare workers, particularly nurses, to the nursing profession in the United States has been beneficial in addressing shortages, several key barriers and limitations exist. Here are some of the main challenges:

1. **Licensure and Certification Requirements:** Foreign-educated nurses, including Filipino nurses, must meet the licensure and certification requirements of the state in which they intend to practice. This can include passing the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) and fulfilling additional state-specific requirements. Preparing for and successfully completing these exams can be a significant barrier for some Filipino nurses due to differences in educational systems, language proficiency, and the need for additional preparation.
2. **Educational and Credentialing Challenges:** The educational qualifications of Filipino nurses may not always align precisely with the requirements of the U.S. nursing system. Some Filipino nursing programs may not cover all the areas of knowledge and skills required in the United States, necessitating further education or bridging programs. The process of credential evaluation and verification can also be time-consuming and costly, creating additional barriers for some Filipino healthcare workers.
3. **Immigration Policies and Visa Limitations:** U.S. immigration policies and visa limitations can present significant challenges for Filipino healthcare workers. Obtaining the necessary work visas or employment-based immigrant visas can be a lengthy and complex process. Visa limitations and caps, such as the annual cap on H-1B visas, can restrict the number of healthcare workers who can be recruited from abroad. These limitations can hinder the recruitment and deployment of Filipino nurses to address nursing shortages.
4. **Cost and Financial Considerations:** The financial implications of pursuing a nursing career in the United States can be significant for Filipino healthcare workers. Costs associated with visa applications, credential evaluation, licensure exams, and relocation expenses can pose financial barriers. Additionally, the salary differentials between the

Philippines and the United States, while often higher in the U.S., may not fully offset the costs and financial sacrifices associated with the transition.

5. Language and Cultural Adaptation: Language proficiency and cultural adaptation can be significant challenges for Filipino healthcare workers entering the U.S. nursing profession. English language proficiency, including proficiency in medical terminology, is crucial for effective communication and patient care. Additionally, adjusting to cultural differences, healthcare practices, and patient expectations in the United States can require adaptation and additional support.
6. Limited Educational Resources and Faculty Shortages: Limited educational resources and faculty shortages in the Philippines can impact the quality and capacity of nursing education programs. Insufficient faculty to accommodate the increasing demand for nursing education and limited access to specialized training and resources can affect the readiness of Filipino nurses to meet the U.S. nursing standards and requirements.

Addressing these barriers and limitations requires collaboration and efforts from multiple stakeholders, including regulatory bodies, educational institutions, recruitment agencies, and policymakers. Streamlining the credentialing process, providing educational and language support, advocating for immigration reforms, and enhancing partnerships between U.S. and Filipino nursing institutions can help mitigate these challenges and facilitate the successful integration of Filipino healthcare workers into the U.S. nursing profession.

How to Address These Challenges

Addressing the challenges associated with bringing Filipino healthcare workers to the nursing profession in the United States requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Here are some strategies to mitigate these challenges:

1. Streamlining Licensure and Certification Processes: Provide guidance and support to Filipino healthcare workers in navigating the licensure and certification processes. Offer resources and preparatory materials for licensure exams like the NCLEX-RN. Collaboration between regulatory bodies and nursing associations can help identify areas of alignment and facilitate the recognition of qualifications to streamline the credentialing process.
2. Bridging Programs and Continuing Education: Develop bridging programs or continuing education opportunities specifically designed for Filipino healthcare workers to bridge any gaps between their education and the U.S. nursing system. These programs can provide additional training, education, and support to meet the specific requirements of the U.S. nursing profession.
3. Advocacy for Immigration Reforms: Advocate for immigration reforms that address the challenges faced by Filipino healthcare workers in obtaining work visas or employment-

based immigrant visas. This includes advocating for visa caps that consider the healthcare workforce needs and facilitating expedited visa processing for healthcare professionals.

4. Financial Assistance and Scholarship Programs: Establish financial assistance programs and scholarships to support Filipino healthcare workers in meeting the financial challenges associated with pursuing a nursing career in the United States. This can help offset some of the costs related to exams, visa processing, credential evaluation, and relocation expenses.
5. Language and Cultural Support: Provide language and cultural support programs to aid Filipino healthcare workers in developing English language proficiency and adapting to the U.S. healthcare system and cultural norms. Language courses, communication workshops, and cultural orientation programs can enhance their ability to effectively communicate and provide patient-centered care.
6. Strengthening Nursing Education in the Philippines: Collaborate with nursing institutions in the Philippines to enhance the quality and capacity of nursing education programs. This can include faculty development initiatives, resource sharing, and the implementation of standardized nursing curricula that align with U.S. nursing standards. Strengthening the educational foundation in the Philippines can better prepare Filipino healthcare workers for success in the U.S. nursing profession.
7. Mentorship and Support Networks: Establish mentorship programs and support networks for Filipino healthcare workers in the United States. These programs can provide guidance, advice, and support from experienced Filipino healthcare professionals who have successfully navigated the challenges of the U.S. nursing profession. Peer support networks can also facilitate cultural integration and provide a sense of community.
8. Collaboration and Partnerships: Foster collaboration and partnerships between U.S. and Filipino nursing institutions, regulatory bodies, and healthcare organizations. These collaborations can promote knowledge sharing, joint research projects, faculty exchanges, and curriculum alignment. Such partnerships can facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications, streamline processes, and improve the overall integration of Filipino healthcare workers into the U.S. nursing profession.

Addressing these challenges requires sustained commitment, coordination, and collaboration among various stakeholders, including regulatory bodies, educational institutions, recruitment agencies, professional associations, and policymakers. By implementing these strategies, the barriers and limitations in bringing Filipino healthcare workers to the nursing profession can be mitigated, enabling a smoother integration and maximizing the contributions of these professionals to the U.S. healthcare system.

Conclusion

Filipino healthcare workers, particularly nurses, have been playing a crucial role in alleviating the growing demand for healthcare workers in the United States, including for the aging population. Filipino nurses have a strong reputation for their clinical expertise, compassionate care, and cultural sensitivity, making them well-suited to provide high-quality care to the aging population.

Filipino nurses have been a significant source of healthcare professionals in the United States for many years. Their strong educational background, English language proficiency, and ability to adapt to new healthcare systems have made them valuable assets to healthcare institutions across the country. Many Filipino nurses have specialized skills and experience in geriatric care, as they have been trained to provide comprehensive care to aging adults in the Philippines, where a significant portion of the population is elderly.

The Filipino diaspora has contributed significantly to addressing the shortage of caregivers and nurses for the aging population in the United States. Filipino healthcare workers have filled critical roles in various healthcare settings, including hospitals, long-term care facilities, and home healthcare. Their dedication, work ethic, and commitment to patient-centered care have made them highly sought after in the healthcare industry.

To expand or further leverage the skills and expertise of Filipino healthcare workers, it is essential to implement policies and programs that facilitate their recruitment, integration, and professional development. This includes streamlining the visa process, recognizing international credentials, and providing support networks to help them adapt to the U.S. healthcare system. Encouraging cultural competence training for healthcare professionals can also promote understanding and effective communication between Filipino caregivers and the aging population they serve.

Filipino healthcare workers, with their strong work ethic, cultural competence, and experience in geriatric care, are well-positioned to continue alleviating the growing demand for healthcare workers in the United States, particularly for the aging population. Recognizing their contributions and implementing measures to support their recruitment and integration will not only address the shortage but also ensure that the aging population receives the compassionate and skilled care they deserve.