



NURSING SHORTAGE CREATES CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AT SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES

Article Contributed By: BPT

With nearly 8 million Americans still unemployed, it may be difficult to imagine a labor shortage is on the horizon. Yet many labor experts predict the health care industry is headed in that direction - and older adults may be one of the groups that will suffer the most if a shortage does occur as forecasted.

"The potential lack of nurses in assisted living communities is particularly concerning," says Kim Estes, senior vice president of clinical services for Brookdale Senior Living.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that by 2022, American health care facilities will need 1 million more nurses than there will be nurses practicing. At the same time, people 65 and older will account for 16 percent of the population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. With 85 percent of seniors having at least one chronic medical condition, and more than two-thirds having at least two, seniors are the age group most in need of care.



Any labor shortage, however, can have a silver lining for those who are willing to train for the understaffed market and pursue available jobs where the need is greatest.

"The nursing shortage, aging population and rising incidence of chronic conditions are creating a perfect storm of opportunity for nurses who want to go into caring for those in assisted living," Estes says. "Many nurses don't think about going into senior living as a career path because it's not a typical hospital or doctor's office position, but it can be very rewarding. Rather than treating a patient and moving onto another patient, assisted living gives nurses the opportunity to build long-lasting relationships and enrich the lives of residents and their families."

Brookdale's assisted living communities hire nurses as health and wellness directors. They oversee all clinical services within a community including managing care associates, setting standards, and leading health and wellness programming. Rather than providing daily hands-on care, these nurses shape the overall quality and content of care their community's seniors receive on a daily basis. The work offers opportunity to advance to higher-level leadership positions at the district, regional and corporate level which pay significantly more than a typical hospital or physician's office job.

Some healthcare providers are taking action to combat the looming nursing shortage, offering support, training and assistance to people interested in entering the profession. For example, Brookdale is launching a student loan reimbursement program hoping to attract more nurses to work in assisted living.

"Whether you're already working as a nurse, or are considering a career in nursing, working in a senior living community can be professionally, personally and financially rewarding," Estes says. To learn more about job opportunities at Brookdale Senior Living, visit www.brookdalecareers.com.