Nursing students turned away despite high demand
By Alicia Caramenico

Even though a recent New England Journal of Medicine study expects the nursing shortage to reemerge as the U.S. economy improves, a record 75,587 qualified nursing applicants were turned away last year, according to a survey from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN). Those rejections included more than 14,354 applicants to graduate programs.

According to the survey, insufficient clinical teaching sites, a lack of faculty, limited classroom space, insufficient preceptors and budget cuts prevented nursing schools from accepting qualified students.

However, the survey showed strong interest in nursing, with enrollments in entry-level baccalaureate nursing programs jumping 5.1 percent last year to 169,125 students.

"The limiting factor is not prospective students--we're turning away thousands every year--it's faculty," Michael Evans, dean of the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Nursing, told the San Angelo Standard Times. "We have an oversupply of students [and] an undersupply of qualified nursing faculty," he said.

For example, about 200 prospective students apply to the licensed vocational nurses program at Howard College in Texas. Even though it offers day and evening classes, the school can accept only 84 students at most, noted the article.

"Sustaining federal funding for nursing education is essential to expanding capacity in nursing schools and meeting the nation's projected demand for nursing care," AACN President Kathleen Potempa said in a statement.

With that in mind, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services is dedicating payments of up to $200 million for hospitals to train advanced practice registered nurses through its Graduate Nurse Education Demonstration, the agency announced last week.

For more:
- here's the survey press release
- read the San Angelo Standard Times article

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