

Challenges Appear on Horizon for Dialysis Workforce

The American Society of Nephrology (ASN) recently conducted a survey which found that 51% of nephrology residency programs go unfilled. The American Nephrology Nurses Association (ANNA) also recently surveyed its membership, and 39% of respondents said their unit has insufficient staff, creating a rushed environment that contributes to incomplete work!

Many ANNA survey respondents saw overlap between their working conditions and patients' treatment conditions. Another area of concern for respondents was long hours, which contribute to various errors. While most nephrology nurses rated patient safety favorably, there is always room for improvement.

There has also been a recent trend of declining interest in nephrology careers, with half of all nephrology residency programs going unfilled. Of the other half, 43% reported changing their plans because of limited opportunities, perceiving there to be few opportunities within 50 miles of their training site!

These trends raise some important questions about patient access and quality of care for dialysis patients. In response to these trends, we need to look for opportunities to ensure adequate numbers of nephrologists, nephrology nurses, social workers and other health professionals are trained to care for dialysis patients. We also need to look to the future. As the number of dialysis patients increases, we must ensure there are trained professionals to meet the growing need.

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