



The American Organization of Nurse Executives

Policy Statement on Foreign Nurse Recruitment

(Approved by the AONE Board of Directors, December 2003)

Statement of the Issue

The nursing profession is facing unprecedented shortages in the United States and throughout the world. The Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions, Division of Nursing, points to an escalating nursing shortage through 2020 (HRSA, 2000). The World Health Organization affirms that its member states report not only shortages of nurses, but also the maldistribution and misutilization of professional nurses.

The issue of foreign nurse recruitment is complex and involves many ethical and cultural considerations. Qualified professional nurses from all countries should be able to exercise freedom of choice in their ability to emigrate and practice their profession; however, many recruitment agencies have seized upon the U.S. nursing shortage as an opportunity to increase their profitability. In doing so, agencies have attempted to lower international regulations governing the profession of nursing, made false promises to recruits, and taken large numbers of nurses from struggling countries, causing the wholesale closure of needed hospitals in desperately poor areas.

Although foreign recruitment allows nurses to dramatically increase their income, in the view of some, it is a short-term solution that robs poor countries to subsidize the nursing needs of richer economies.

Policy Position

AONE supports the freedom of choice that permits qualified professional nurses to practice in an environment where they can

provide quality patient care and enjoy the quality of life to which they may aspire. AONE also supports the lawful entry of nurses from foreign countries to work in the U.S. and its territories provided that they meet all federal qualifications for entry and practice. It is incumbent upon institutions that recruit foreign nurses to foster an environment that is culturally sensitive and supportive as these nurses are assimilated into the American health care system. Furthermore, it is the position of AONE that the global nature of the shortage makes it unethical for the wholesale recruitment of professional nurses, which can jeopardize the health and safety of indigent populations. AONE strongly supports increased public and private funding to address the root causes of the nursing shortage both here and abroad.

Reference

Health Resources and Services Administration, 2000. *The Registered Nurse Population: Findings from the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses*. Rockville, MD: HRSA.