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Education More Important Than Immigration to Solve Nursing Shortage

New research shows that a majority of US healthcare consumers would pay higher taxes to fund increased education facilities for American nurses.

CARLSBAD, Calif., June 30, 2008 – The short-form survey is part of the morefocus group's on-going health and lifestyle research initiative that has been designed to study the changing attitudes of US consumers to healthcare, leisure, education and work. The survey was carried out over a six week period ending on June 25th, 2008, and delivered across a mix of over 100 health and lifestyle websites reaching some two million consumers.

"A particularly interesting outcome of the study was the opinion consistency between the respondents initiating the survey from both health and lifestyle websites," said Dr. Regan Carey, the morefocus' SVP who led the study. He continued, "From these data there is a clear indication that, irrespective of the respondent's health status at the point that they completed the survey, there is concern that hospitals and clinics are not fully-staffed with well trained and educated professionals."

On the questions centering on relaxing immigration requirements for nurses from overseas, versus reducing the educational requirements for American-trained nurses, there was a dramatic response differential. Only 27.7% of the respondents felt that a reduction in educational requirements was an option, with 59.4% supporting an easing of immigration restrictions. However, the contrast of this result with the 84.1% who would prefer to see an increased supply of American-educated nurses demonstrates that, in spite of the shortage, there is a clear preference for a 'home-grown' solution.

The nursing shortage has its roots in the mid 1990's. At this time, prior to baby-boomers burdening the healthcare system, and as insurance companies increased their influence on the delivery of healthcare, there was a move to cut nursing staff. As a result, many nursing schools narrowed their programs, with some closing altogether. Colin Lucas-Mudd, CEO of morefocus, commented, "It is gratifying to see the growing acceptance of the need to invest once again in order to address problems in the healthcare system. Had insurance companies and those others with a vested interest in the economics of healthcare taken a longer term view, we would likely not have the problems that we face today. It is to be hoped that those same institutions, together with schools, colleges and other educational establishments share the views expressed by healthcare consumers."

Mr. Lucas-Mudd continued, "The unexpected result on the question of increased taxation, with a clear majority prepared to pay more, has interesting ramifications for the upcoming US Presidential campaigns—even more so given the percentage of respondents that would also agree with relaxed immigration procedures. With the deep divisions between the Republican and Democratic platforms on immigration and taxation, it will be interesting to see how this plays out."

In terms of demographics, 54.1% of the respondents were in the 45 to 64 age range, with a secondary peak, 20.6%, between 25-34 years of age. Male respondents, at 43.6% of completions against 56.4% female, were unusually balanced.