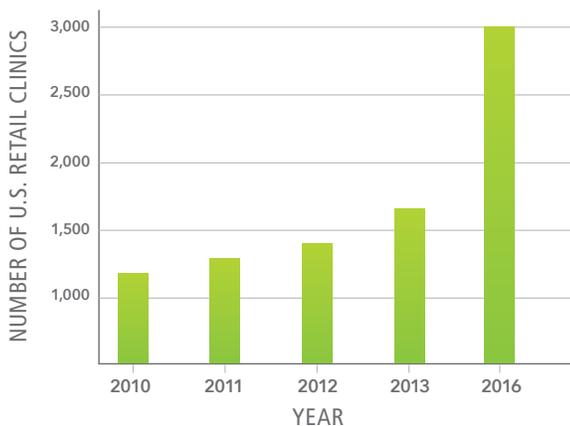


Retail Clinics Are Flourishing, but How Will the Staffing Shortage Challenge Growth?

Physician shortage pushes demand for nurses and nurse practitioners

With more than 10 million patients visiting retail clinics every year (Forbes), retail clinic growth is booming and patient satisfaction has generally exceeded 90% (Convenient Care Association). Providing the bulk of this care are nurse practitioners (NPs).

But the retail clinic industry is in the midst of a significant challenge that will only increase as convenient care clinics grow: Retail clinics are expanding concurrently with a serious healthcare practitioner shortage that is affecting the very health professionals operating the convenient care clinic machine.



Source: Convenient Care Association

Because of the primary care physician shortage, estimates suggest that primary care physicians taking sole responsibility for the care of their patients would need to spend 18 hours per day to provide a full range of diagnostic and preventive services, supporting the implementation of the team-based model of care ("Transforming Primary Care: From Past Practice To the Practice of the Future." Health Affairs). As a result, the primary care shortage is driving NPs to pick up the expanding workload in the primary care arena. This puts NPs in high demand for various healthcare delivery systems, including primary care, urgent care, hospitals and retail clinics. In fact, 85% to 90% of clinicians employed by retail clinics are nurse practitioners (Convenient Care Association).

"We are seeing nurse practitioners being pulled in many different directions, and this is happening on top of a significant nurse shortage, as well," said Bonnie Britton, Senior Vice President, AMN Healthcare. "The demand for NPs will only get bigger as the physician and nursing shortages continue and convenient care expands. And this makes NPs harder to find and harder to keep."

More difficult news for nurse staffing

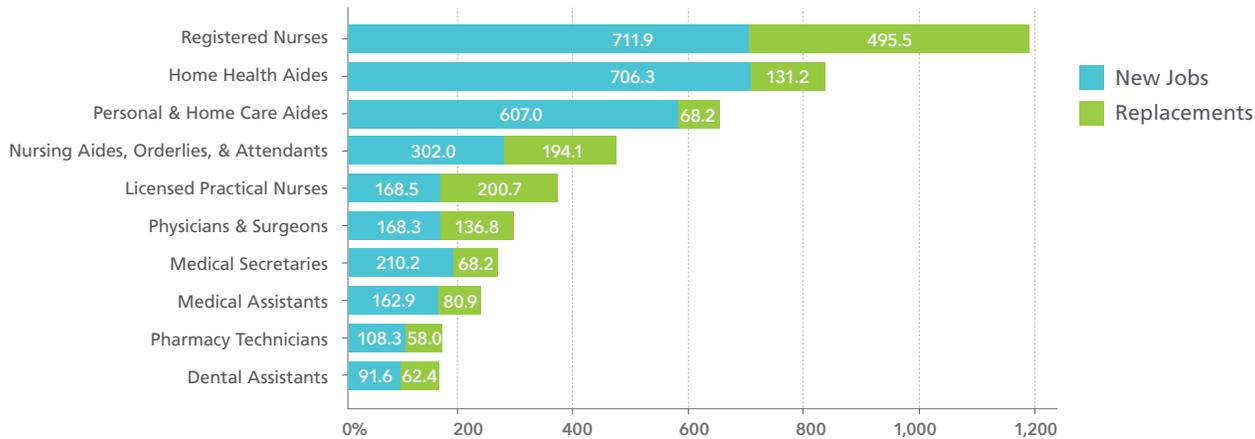
While NPs are the primary care providers in the majority of retail clinics, RNs and LPNs fill many other rolls in the convenient care industry. But as boomers age, the nursing shortage is expected to worsen. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Projections 2012-2022 released in December 2013:

- Registered Nursing is among the top occupations regarding job growth through 2022
- The RN workforce is expected to grow from 2.71 million in 2012 to 3.24 million in 2022, an increase of 526,800 or 19%
- The projected need is for 525,000 replacement nurses in the workforce, bringing the total number of job openings for nurses due to growth and replacements to 1.05 million by 2022

Other retail clinic staffing challenges may include physicians, advanced practitioners, medical assistants, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and allied health professionals.

"Although growth is good for the retail clinic's bottom line, the question becomes: How will retail clinics bridge their rapid growth, a clinician shortage, and the increasing competition of finding high-quality NPs, nurses in general, and other healthcare professionals in order to meet patient needs and revenue goals?"

Selected health occupations with greatest need for new workers between 2010 and 2020



Your retail clinic needs a staffing plan

As your retail clinic patient base grows and the pool of healthcare clinicians shrinks, achieving and maintaining proper levels and high-quality staff so retail clinics can concentrate on meeting patient needs will be an ongoing challenge. To keep quality of care and patient satisfaction high, Britton said retail clinics need staffing plans in place.

According to the American Nurses Association, staffing plans should address:

- The ability to be flexible
- The intensity of patients' needs
- Staff experience
- Unit layout
- Resource availability

In addition to staff size and the skill sets needed to cover patient visits and disorders treated, a staffing plan must include variables such as ramped-up need during cold and flu season, regional demographics and growth rates.

Britton said that ensuring adequate staffing can satisfy patient expectations, which is a priority when it comes to retail clinic services. A patient can go to an emergency room for anything

that can be dealt with in a retail clinic, but it's the low cost, walk-in convenience, short wait times, cost savings and extended hours and locations that attract people to retail clinics. If that does not remain the norm, then revenue can suffer.

Also, retail clinics must be competitive to attract the high-quality healthcare professionals needed to meet patient demands in a rapidly growing industry. This includes planning for excellent benefits and maintaining a work environment that attracts top candidates nationally, Britton said.

Finally, your staffing plan should explore the benefits of using a mix of temporary and permanent staffing positions to deal with shortages. You will find that temporary and permanent staff rates are similar, but when you have a vacancy, a loss in revenue resulting from that vacancy can far exceed the cost of having a locum tenens on staff.

"The need for staff planning can quickly become evident in a fast-growth environment such as retail clinics," Britton said. "Early signs of trouble from rapid growth include difficulties in filling shift schedules and staff burnout. A staffing plan that considers temporary and permanent clinicians can help avoid these problems while containing costs, improving employee and patient satisfaction, and decreasing adverse events."

To learn more about AMN Retail Clinic Staffing Services, call **(866) 352-5959** or visit www.amnhealthcare.com/retail



We've earned
The Joint Commission's
Gold Seal of Approval™



Workforce Solutions—MSP

