

ELIMINATING NURSING AGENCY USAGE AS A NURSING WORKFORCE PLANNING STRATEGY AT HUMBER RIVER HEALTH



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DESCRIPTION

Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, nursing staff shortages have been a persistent challenge in the healthcare system. The Nursing Professional Practice team at Humber River Health (HRH) identified the need for proactive strategic workforce planning. HRH enhanced its recruitment strategy by developing an in-house system to prepare nurses for the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). By retaining students and supporting their transition into independent practice, HRH was able to onboard new nurses that were already familiar with the organization's culture. Having invested resources in professional growth at HRH, these nurses are a proven asset to the organization. With an increased nursing workforce, staffing vacancies were reduced and the use of agency nurses in the ICU were eliminated.

OBJECTIVE

Improve the recruitment and retention of new ICU nursing staff at HRH to eliminate the usage of agency ICU nurses.

ACTIONS TAKEN

Findings from the ongoing monthly workforce planning meetings held with ICU managers indicated both short and long-term vacancies. Utilizing an iterative method, HRH created an in-house training and mentorship program for newly registered nurses to work in the ICU. The newly registered nurses were integrated into the organizational culture, providing professional development opportunities to advance their careers. This, in collaboration with strategic student placement methods stabilized ICU staffing.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

This was a long-term workforce planning strategy which resulted in the elimination of agency nurse usage. Between 2021 and 2022, the organization had spent approximately \$120,000.00 in extra costs by contracting agency ICU nurses. As of 2023, through triangulation of strategic student placement and workforce planning eliminated the use of agency staffing.

LESSONS LEARNED

Proactive workforce planning activities have stabilized the workforce, resulting in stabilized staffing budget variances and maintaining the delivery of safe, quality patient care

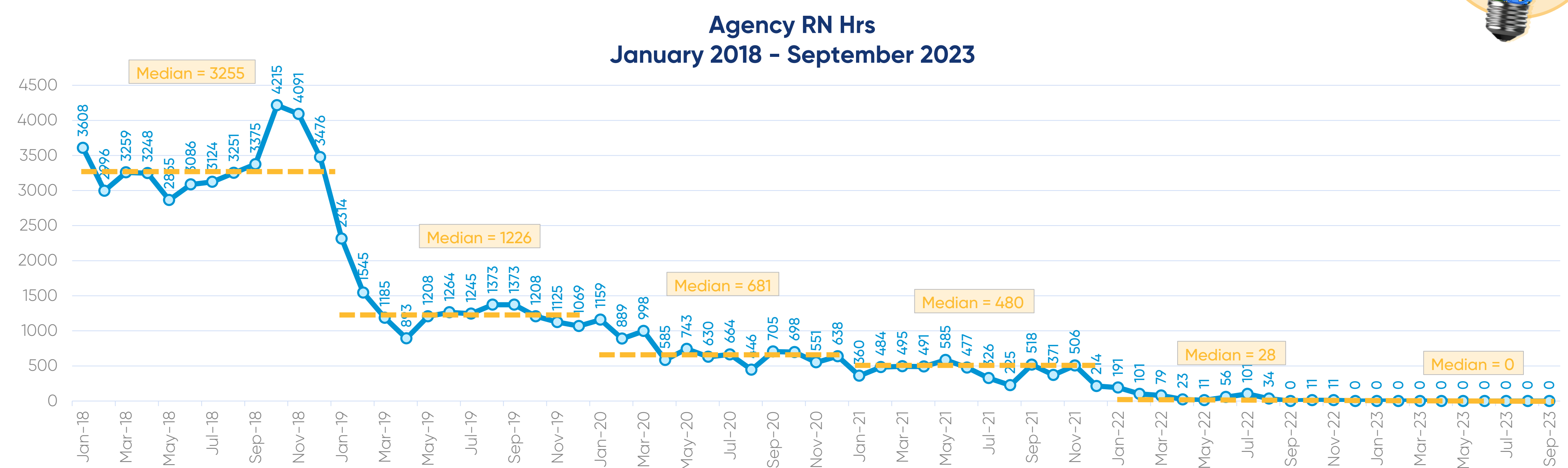


Figure 1.

The figure above provides an overview of utilization of agency nursing hours per month at HRH. The blue line is the reported monthly hours for agency nurses, while the orange line provides the various medians that were calculated over time (January 2018-September 2023).

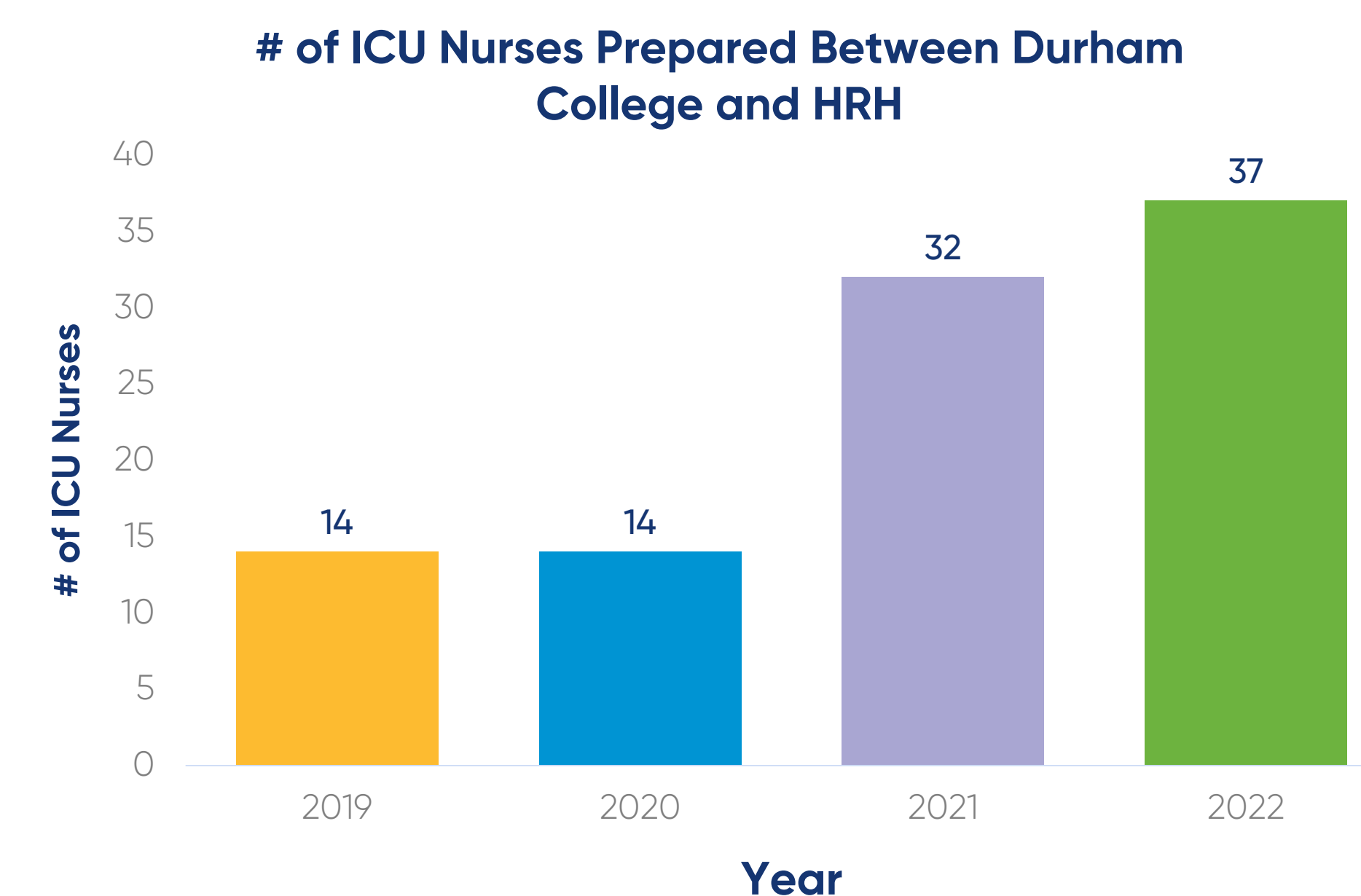


Figure 2.

This figure provides an overview of the number of ICU nurses that have been certified through the collaboration between Durham College and HRH. The 37 nurses represent 86% success rate using the accelerated ICU certification program, in comparison to the historical 50% success rate achieved through the traditional pathway at HRH.

Year	Hours Worked	Total RN Agency (ICU)	Total RN HRH	Difference
2021	4530 Hours	\$306,907.50	\$203,850.00	\$103,057.50
2022	618.75 Hours	\$41,920.31	\$27,843.75	\$14,076.56
Total	5148.75 Hours	\$348,827.81	\$231,693.75	\$117,134.06

Figure 3.

A breakdown of the costs associated with an agency RN versus a hospital staff RN for amount of hours worked in a year.