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ABSTRACT

As the U.S. population ages and policy changes emerge, such as the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, the U.S. will experience a significant shortage of Registered Nurses (RNs). Many colleges and universities are attempting to increase the size of nursing cohorts to respond to this imminent shortage. Notwithstanding a 2.6% enrollment increase in 2013, there are still an inadequate number of qualified applicants being accepted to respond to the projected demand for 3.24 million Registered Nurses by 2022, a labor increase of 19% (AACN, 2014).

It is important that nursing schools be able to forecast, with confidence, the probability that a student will successfully complete a nursing program and ultimately pass the National Council Licensure Examination-Registered Nurse (NCLEX-RN). Nursing programs use a variety of factors to determine which students are best prepared for their programs. Some of those factors are scholastic aptitude measures such as GPA, nursing aptitude measures (Byrd, et al., 1999, p.37,) and standardized aptitude tests (Newton, Smith & Moore, 2007). Other research has shown that grades in particular courses are predictive of successful completion of nursing programs (Simon & Augustus, 2009; Uyehara, 2007; Herrera, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to further examine the extent to which grades in gateway courses, particularly Human Pathophysiology, predict future success in completing a nursing program. Special emphasis is placed on Human Pathophysiology and Adult Health as variables of success. We found that the grade earned in Human Pathophysiology was predictive of success in Adult Health and that the institution where that course is taken is related to success in Adult Health also.