

Coping strategies for new nurses

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(Medical Xpress)—Empowering graduate nurses with self-coping strategies to help them adjust to the workforce is the focus of a new Flinders University research project.

The study – conducted by lecturer Mr Peter Mellor from the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Flinders Rural Clinical School in Renmark – will explore the ways in which newly-qualified registered nurses support themselves to make the transition from academia to the workforce.

The aim is to seek feedback from nurses in their first years of full-time work at Flinders Medical Centre, the Women's and Children's Hospital and in the Riverland to identify successful self-[coping strategies](#) for new graduates to use in challenging environments.

"Graduate nurses generally don't have a lot of clinical support once they enter the workforce because of limited resources and staff demands in the [healthcare sector](#)," Mr Mellor said.

"As a result, new graduates often find themselves in chaotic, dysfunctional or unsupportive work environments and this propensity remains quite high," he said.

"Therefore we need to find out how new nurses are coping, and what strategies are most effective, so we can pass that knowledge on to recent graduates."

Mr Mellor said [nursing students](#) were educated in relatively predictable,

controlled environments and, as a result, many nurses felt overwhelmed and under-prepared when they entered the workforce.

"Clinical placement has a degree of uncertainty but student nurses don't actually have to take on the full responsibilities of a registered nurse," he said.

"They might be allocated four patients on placement while a registered nurse cares for 15 so when they do start working they find themselves facing various issues that they didn't necessarily encounter during their degree.

"For example, new graduates have the vital need to "fit in" and in doing so are often reluctant to say they don't know how to do a patient care activity because they don't want other staff members to think they're being weak."

Understanding this phenomenon, and the strategies successful graduates have used in the past, will contribute to safe patient care, Mr Mellor said.

"There haven't been any studies identified which look at what new graduate registered nurses do to cope with the stressors involved in adjusting to full-time work.

"If we can identify the most effective coping mechanisms we might be able to develop strategies which would ultimately lead to improved retention and job satisfaction of new graduate [nurses](#) and, more importantly, improved patient outcomes."

Provided by Flinders University

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