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Nurses tending to a patient at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (Photo: GPHC)

HEALTH

'Train to retain' – Nurses Association says

By Editor

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As the world observes International Nurses Day, President of the Guyana Nurses Association (GNA), Cleopatra Barkoye, believes there needs to be a targeted approach in Guyana, to not only train more nurses but to ensure that those trained and registered nurses remain and work in the country.

She said shortage is among the issues facing nurses who continue to give their service amid the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. But more importantly, with efforts already afoot to address the shortage in nurses, Barkoye said a retention plan and strategy to retain nurses is needed.

During an interview with the News Room on Wednesday, Barkoye said based on projections coming out of discussions between the GNA and the nursing council, some 1,700 nurses will need to be trained over the next five years.

This is based on the migration statistics and the projection for nurses who will retire annually. Barkoye said this is why a strategy to ensure they remain to offer care and services to the local population is important, lest Guyana is confronted with a grimmer situation linked to a shortage in nurses.

A 2011 report by the World Health Organisation (WHO) had addressed the issue of nurse migration in Guyana and offered guidelines and plans for relevant human resources development and management, in addition, to support and evidence for decision-making.



President of the Guyana Nurses Association (GNA), Cleopatra Barkoye (Photo: News Room/May 12, 2021)

Barkoye said the migration of nurses has left the local nursing workforce at a great disadvantage.

“We might be overstaffed in one area but there is a need for nurses right across Guyana... one in every six nurses will retire in the next five years,” she said.

She explained that there are over 3,000 nurses currently registered in Guyana

“Having nurses on the register don’t mean they are working in Guyana. Many of them actually work abroad but maintain their registration here,” Barkoye further explained.

There are four nursing schools in Guyana; three state-owned and one private. Barkoye said on average, a total of 125 nurses are trained by these institutions yearly.

“But we need to train to retain,” she added. She also spoke about the need for greater incentives to be offered to local nurses and for attention to be paid to the psychological effect the job can have on them.

“Nurses are not robots. We are humans and cannot come to work to take care of the ill, manage their relatives, work short with resources, see people die and go home and be comfortable... we are humans it affects us greatly.”

Barkoye served as a nurse for well over 30 years and went from a nursing assistant to a registered nurse with a nursing education that includes a Master Degree. She thanked all nurses for their continued dedication and faithful service.

She also reminded that the responsibility to be trained lies with every individual nurse.

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