



# Research Week 2020

## The development of initial nursing education in China: Scale, structure and distribution

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Nursing education, Scale, Structure, Distribution, Nursing shortage

### Abstract

#### Background

China is facing a nurse shortage. Strengthening the development of initial nursing education as the primary preparation for a robust nursing workforce must be addressed.

#### Objective

To describe the development of nursing education in mainland China and to analyze related issues.

#### Method

We analyzed the scale, structure and distribution of nursing education programs and recruitment from 2006 to 2017 in mainland China and compared them with the scale of the nursing workforce over the same time period.

#### Results

Initial nursing education in China has developed rapidly but geographic distribution is unbalanced, and the overall educational levels need to be upgraded. In 2017, the recruitment was 501,512 which consists of 50,590 (10.09%) in baccalaureate programs, 197,409 (39.36%) in advanced diploma programs and 253,513 (50.55%) in secondary diploma programs. The recruitment has stabilized at a more than 500,000 a year since 2009. The recruitment to secondary diploma programs continues to decline. Even with rapid growth, there are only 2.74 nurses per 1000 population in 2017. That same year, the recruitment of nursing students in each region per 1000 population was 0.26 (east), 0.40 (middle), 0.49 (west), and 0.34 (northeast), while the number of registered nurses per 1000 population had the opposite pattern (2.88 (east), 2.63 (middle), 2.69 (west) and 2.62 (northeast)).

#### Conclusions

Nursing education in China has developed rapidly but significant issues remain. We suggest monitoring the development of nursing education continuously, increasing recruitment to advanced diploma and baccalaureate programs to upgrade the overall initial education preparation of nurses, adopting multiple targeted strategies to promote the positive development of nursing education, balance the distribution of graduates, and improve recruitment and retention strategies to ease the nurse shortage throughout China.

