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COVID-19 Pandemic Impacted Graduate Nursing Students at Work, Home, and School

Stress can influence the ability to focus, study, and may delay continuation in graduate school

AURORA, Colo. (May 12, 2021) – Researchers at the University of Colorado College of Nursing found that many of its graduate students suffered from increased stress after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 90% of students worked during the pandemic and on average, the students worked nearly 34 hours per week. Juggling school, a varied work-load and changes to their schedules, all significantly influenced stress levels.

Graduate nursing students are registered nurses pursuing a Master’s degree in Nursing (MS), Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). A total of 222 graduate nursing students completed the survey. The vast majority of students were employed before the pandemic and a significant decrease in employment occurred during the pandemic (97.3% to 90.1%, $p < .001$). Overall stress increased ($p < .001$). The increased total stress was associated with students participating in clinical rotations ($q = 0.024$) and having a change in work hours ($q = 0.022$).

Study findings, published recently in the [Journal of Professional Nursing](#), also reveal that graduate school plans changed due to the pandemic for 18.2% of students.

“The past year brought challenges so unique that it’s critical to understand how our students – who juggle clinical work and studies – are faring,” says Priscilla Nodine, PhD, CNM, associate professor at the University of Colorado College of Nursing and study author. “Nursing schools need to address graduate student concerns during the pandemic, including having clear communication platforms and offering support services,” says Nodine.

“These study results are crucial in understanding how to take care of our future workforce who are already on the front lines,” says Nodine. “More federal funding for nurses going back to school to become advanced practice nurses is needed to ease their financial burden and help increase the primary care workforce.”

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