



## COVID-19 and Nurse Entrepreneurship

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### Commentary

The American Healthcare System continues to be fundamentally changed by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has generated changes by accelerating innovation and helped to clarify best practices. A 2020 study of healthcare professionals' mental health related to the pandemic was conducted in 35 states. The respondents, of which 13.3% were nurses, reported general anxiety, concern for their health and high levels of depressive symptoms in caring for COVID-19 patients. Shortages of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other equipment, as well as an increase in COVID-19 patients, have been identified as causing secondary trauma and damaging morale [1]. Despite nurses being called to lead in these unprecedented times, they are experiencing exhaustion and burnout prompting an exodus from their bedside positions [2].

### Nurse entrepreneurs: Unexplored resource for innovation

The pandemic has created challenges and afforded potential opportunities in diverse healthcare settings. It continues to have a negative impact on nurses' mental health and well-being, according to the Mental Health and Wellness Survey 3 conducted in September, 2021. It was further noted that nurses have been prompted to prioritize their overall health resulting in seeking strategies such as establishing their own business or other means to supplement their income to transition from bedside nursing [3]. Unlike the traditional perception of the nursing profession, nurses becoming entrepreneurs can be a resourceful role change which emphasizes the unique knowledge and skill sets they possess to seize opportunities to lead innovation within healthcare [4].

### Nurse entrepreneurs and their qualities

Entrepreneurship is a relatively unknown phenomenon in international nursing research, and the prevalence of entrepreneurial nurses is only 0.5% to 1% of all working nurses globally [5]. These nurses leverage their unique experience and expertise in healthcare to positively impact the industry and care delivery by creating innovative, systems-level changes and tools utilizing classic business and financial knowledge and strategies (Nurse Theory.com) [6].

As entrepreneurship is often self-taught, nurses possess and practice business skills such as organization, management, collaboration, and teamwork, networking, and mentoring. Additional professional role responsibilities enhance their critical thinking and practical problem-solving abilities, all of which well-position them to develop successful, solution-driven companies strengthened by their qualities such as flexibility, resilience, and commitment to excellence and continuous education [7].

### Where nurse entrepreneurs work

Nurse entrepreneurs are offering services in a broad and diverse range of settings including mental health, wellness coaching, blogging, legal nurse consulting, nutrition, patient advocacy, and providing motivational strategies geared toward healthcare workers [3]. They may develop educational programs and resources to guide and support nurses and nursing students in their academic and professional lives, based on their common background, knowledge, and experiences. Home healthcare and consulting services engaged in by some Nurse entrepreneurs benefits from their expertise in providing a more comprehensive and individualized approach to patient care, services, and resource utilization, to reduce hospital visits and unnecessary medical calls.

### Benefits of being a nurse entrepreneur

The benefits of nurse entrepreneurship stem from having autonomy, flexibility and control in work scheduling, creative freedom, and unlimited earning potential [7]. The opportunities for personal and professional growth expand through ongoing sharpening of business knowledge and skills to thrive in the evolving healthcare industry. The ability to achieve and sustain a desirable work-life balance is facilitated by not being limited within or negatively affected by employment responsibilities in a healthcare work environment.

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### Nurse entrepreneurs making an impact

Early examples of nurse entrepreneurs within the profession include Florence Nightingale and Clara Barton, who are models of nurses working independently as contractors or private registry [8]. Exact numbers of nurse entrepreneurs today have not been reported, but the expansion of entrepreneurship is being necessitated and propelled in many fields by the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes within the healthcare industry are needed to meet demands for creativity and innovation in care, services, and preparation of the diverse workforce who will deliver them and sustain positive outcomes. There is unlimited potential for nurse entrepreneurs to continue to have a profound impact on the health care industry and population health. Based on their visionary role, expertise, and commitment to lead and advocate for quality patient care and professional practice, they can uniquely contribute to achieve a preferred future in healthcare.

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