



TAKE CHARGE
OF YOUR
NURSING
CAREER

SECOND EDITION

LOIS SARAH MARSHALL

NO MATTER WHAT STAGE YOU'RE IN, YOUR NURSING CAREER IS BOTH A JOURNEY AND A PROCESS THAT MUST BE NURTURED, GROWN, AND MANAGED.

Wherever you are—in the world or in your nursing journey—you deserve career-development and management support that goes beyond merely writing a resumé or a curriculum vitae. You expect tailored advice and innovative resources applicable to the many roles you will play and challenges you will face in our rapidly expanding and ever-developing global industry. This newly updated book will give you insights and tools to help you navigate and thrive throughout the entire span of your individual nursing journey.

Take Charge of Your Nursing Career, Second Edition, establishes a unique and distinct perspective from which to develop and manage your career from beginning to end. Author Lois Sarah Marshall offers timely and relevant topics, strategies, tips, and examples to help you:

- Define your personal career trajectory no matter the stage in your journey
- Expand your role and knowledge using professional development and continuing education
- Understand and take full advantage of the value of mentorship
- Leverage social media to develop, augment, and propel your career
- Pursue entrepreneurship
- Manage your professional and personal time

LOIS SARAH MARSHALL, PHD, MN, RN, is the principal and owner of LSM Educational Consulting. A nurse and nurse educator for more than 40 years, she has been at the forefront of nursing career development and management. For the last 10 years she has served as lead advisor for the Sigma Career Center and coordinator of the Career Development Center for the National Student Nurses' Association.



A black stethoscope is positioned in the upper left corner, and a spiral-bound notebook is in the upper right corner. The background is a light-colored wooden surface with several colorful sticky notes (green, orange, red, yellow, blue) scattered around.

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR NURSING CAREER

SECOND EDITION

LOIS SARAH MARSHALL, PHD, MN, RN



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Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing (Sigma) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is developing nurse leaders anywhere to improve healthcare everywhere. Founded in 1922, Sigma has more than 135,000 active members in over 100 countries and territories. Members include practicing nurses, instructors, researchers, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and others. Sigma's more than 540 chapters are located at more than 700 institutions of higher education throughout Armenia, Australia, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, England, Eswatini, Ghana, Hong Kong, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Malawi, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, the United States, and Wales. Learn more at www.sigmanursing.org.

Sigma Theta Tau International
550 West North Street
Indianapolis, IN, USA 46202

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LOIS SARAH MARSHALL, PHD, MN, RN

Lois S. Marshall has been a nurse and nurse educator for 43 years. She continues to have a diverse and consistently evolving professional nursing career. Her career journey has taken her from full-time academics to broad-based consultation, where she has taken on challenges, embraced the many opportunities afforded to her, and grown her expertise in a wide array of areas.

The “guiding post” of many of these opportunities has been centered on the theme of career. Marshall has enhanced her work in all the facets of her own career, while at the same time mentoring others to develop, promote, challenge, and empower themselves as they navigate their own career trajectories. She has been at the forefront of nursing career development and management and all their various components over the last 10 years in her roles as lead advisor for the Sigma Career Center since 2013. Marshall has also been the coordinator of the Career Development Center for the National Student Nurses’ Association since 2012.

Marshall received her BSN from the University of Miami, Florida, USA; an MN from Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA; and a PhD from the University of Miami, with a focus on higher education, curriculum design, and outcomes assessment. From 1980 to 2004, Marshall held a variety of faculty and administration positions while at the University of Miami School of Nursing. She received numerous teaching awards throughout her career. In 2004, she was selected a Helene Fuld Fellow by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. In 2019, she was honored to receive the Florida Nurses Association Mentor/Role Model ICON Award for her contributions to the nursing profession.

Marshall’s research expertise is related to test-taking strategies, outcomes assessment, and evaluation related to the NCLEX-RN examination. She has been preparing nursing graduates with her own course for

40 years, locally, nationally, and internationally. Since the pandemic, Marshall has offered all her tutoring, reviews, and expertise free of charge for any nursing graduate to “pay it forward,” empowering them to achieve their first nursing career success. Her current research projects relate to career development and management in the broadest sense, including some of the specific areas addressed in this book, such as mentorship.

Marshall presents statewide, nationally, and internationally on topics ranging from career advancement and related subjects, the promotion of evidence-based nursing and research, the development of abstracts for presentations and grant applications, mentorship, and leadership. She mentors Sigma members and nonmembers in exploring and articulating their career identity, advancing their careers along their chosen path(s), and achieving their career goals. She also publishes on these same topics.

Marshall has been the principal and owner of LSM Educational Consulting since 2004. Her consultative services include but are not limited to career development, management, and advancement; mentorship; NCLEX-RN/PN and test-taking preparation for individuals and groups of students, nationally and internationally, within or outside of schools and colleges of nursing; faculty development related to instruction; curriculum design and implementation; curriculum and program evaluation; evidence-based nursing practice; abstract development; small grant writing and research development; scholarly writing development; and project management.

Marshall has been the clinical editor for Elsevier’s *ClinicalKey for Nursing, Evidence-Based Nursing Monographs* for 14 years. The research-based monographs are designed for bedside nurses, wherever that care is administered. These monographs have the unique feature of providing a synopsis of each of the most recent and relevant nursing and other research studies, as well as evidence-based nursing recommendations based on these synopses and current practice. The research monographs are a complete document for the nurse to provide them the information and evidence at the point of care.

Marshall is the research column editor for the *Journal of Radiology Nursing*, where she writes a quarterly column. Marshall is also the chair of the Research Special Interest Group for the Florida Nurse's Association. This committee is responsible for the coordination of the annual Research and Evidence-Based Nursing Conference.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Sarah E. Gray, DNP, RN, CEN, FAEN, is a creative visionary whose mission is to equip and empower others. She discovered her passion for service and transformational leadership during her 15 years in emergency and occupational medicine. She served as social media chair, among other roles, for the Indiana Emergency Nurses Association for six years. She is a fellow in the Academy of Emergency Nursing. Gray is currently the director of educational resources, global initiatives, and the marketplace for Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing (Sigma). She develops continuing education programs, domestic and international events, and opportunities for the global nursing community. In this role, she also oversees Sigma's consultative status and programming with the United Nations (UN). Gray is a presenter, author, and coach on practical solutions, innovations, and inspirational topics, specializing in professional branding and leadership. She recognizes the power of professional branding within her own professional network and endeavors. She is now sought out to share her insights on using social media and networking to cultivate current and future potential in individuals.

Christina Ferrell, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, has been a nurse for 26 years with 19 years in nursing leadership roles. Her ambition to lead and mentor has been fulfilled in roles ranging from charge nurse to nurse manager, nursing director, director of clinical excellence, director of hospital education, and Magnet program coordinator. Her current role as an assistant nursing professor and director of the RN to MSN program at the University of Mississippi Medical Center's School of Nursing continues to afford her the opportunity to support the

professional growth of nurses. Her impact has been acknowledged through induction into the Norman C. Nelson Order of Teaching Excellence, University Hospitals' Leadership Excellence Award, Mississippi Nurses Association Non-traditional Nurse of the Year Award, University of Mississippi School of Nursing Distinguished Alumni of the Decade, and the Mississippi Hospital Association's Nurse Executive of the Year. Ferrell's experiences led her to a quest to understand the concept of nursing professional identity and its development over the continuum of one's career. Her PhD dissertation research focused on understanding the nursing professional identity of senior nurse leaders. Ferrell now collaborates with nurses from around the globe who share her interest in further understanding professional identity in nursing.

Matthew S. Howard, DNP, RN, CEN, TCRN, CPEN, CPN, is currently the Director of Scholarship and Leadership Resources at Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing (Sigma). While also serving as faculty at Northern Kentucky University, Howard works as a staff nurse in the emergency department at Eskenazi Health in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA. His nursing career has taken him from stretcher-side nursing to academia and back. His clinical background includes EMS, emergency department nursing, flight nursing, and trauma nursing, with several leadership positions. Howard serves on several local, national, and international councils and nursing associations, including the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA), the International Network for Doctoral Education in Nursing (INDEN), and Sigma, and as an advisory member to the National Nursing Education Research Network.

Samantha Martin, BA, is an experienced career program specialist with more than five years of experience working with Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing (Sigma). She has supported the development of the Sigma mentorship and coaching program, the Sigma mentoring cohort, and numerous other career-support programs offered through Sigma for its membership. Although she does not hold a nursing degree, she does place a strong value on evidence-based program development and has a calling to work with professional nurses to help them reach their career goals.

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FOREWORD

Reading the introduction to *Take Charge of Your Nursing Career* caused me to reflect on my own career trajectory. Books like this with relevant, practical content and strategies for career planning were not available in 1970 when I graduated. Although I have had a successful and varied career, including positions as a clinical pediatric nurse, faculty member, academic administrator, and CEO, retired, of Sigma Theta Tau International, there were challenges, disappointments, and detours along the way. The material in this book would have assisted me greatly across my journey.

Subjects such as social media, entrepreneurship, work-life balance, and international issues, all of which this text covers in detail, were not a focus for nurses as they are and should be today. The chapter on mentorship particularly resonated with me. Although I did not have access to the information and tools in this book, I was fortunate to have the guidance of mentors whose support paralleled these topic areas. The mentorship chapter addresses not only having a mentor but also being a mentor. Based on the support I received across my career, I purposefully focus on being a mentor and giving back. The authors provide details on both areas, including how to develop a strong, effective mentoring relationship.

At first glance, *Take Charge of Your Nursing Career* may appear to be just for new graduates; however, it is so much more. I highly recommend this rich, easy-to-read, practical book for nurses to use at all points on their journey. They will find guidance for success in their current positions and/or as they transition into new positions. Educators can also use this book in courses preparing students for graduation and their careers. In short, the important information in this book will help nurses be successful and therefore will make a difference for nursing and the health of those we provide care.

–Patricia Thompson, EdD

PREFACE. OR, SOME WORDS ON THE PANDEMIC . . .

Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, the period between March 2020 and March 2021, when this book was completed, has been one of the most impactful years of our lives. Every nurse across the globe has been affected personally and/or professionally in one way or another by the pandemic. Maybe you were a practicing nurse who had to quickly adapt to a changing work environment. Perhaps you were a nurse leader in a clinical setting charged with helping others navigate these uncharted waters. Possibly you were a nurse educator who had to reformulate your approach to teaching nursing students without in-person classroom or clinical experiences. Perhaps you had to work virtually—something new, strange, and stressful. Maybe you were a nurse in a rural area who was furloughed or laid off. Or maybe had to put your career on hold for family or other reasons.

Your life's path may have taken unexpected twists and turns this year. But as we emerge from the pandemic, each one of us should take a moment to assess where we are personally and professionally. Anytime a crisis of the magnitude of COVID-19 occurs, it's natural to take stock in this way. In doing so, you might realize that you are experiencing some degree of post-traumatic stress disorder. If so, it's critical that you take the time you need to heal, and to get help if you need it. Although you might have been repeatedly told you are a "healthcare hero," you might not feel that way. It's OK to take a minute to reestablish your personal and professional self! The nursing profession and all its diverse career options will still be here when you're ready to reemerge.

We have learned many lessons as individuals, communities, and a global society, as well as within the nursing profession. We can use these lessons—both positive and negative—to modify our short-term and long-term goals or even establish new ones as we move forward. For some of you, the immediate focus will be on personal goals. Others will focus on achieving existing career goals. Still others—especially those of you who have been on the front lines—might be considering a career realignment or a career change.

Not everyone wants change, let alone embraces it. But thinking ahead and being prepared for change are critical to your career journey. Change is not always easy, and it doesn't always happen right away. Still, one of the great things about being a nurse is that you can constantly re-examine your career trajectory and expand and grow in directions you hadn't even dreamed of when you graduated from nursing school. Particularly as our world regains its balance in the aftermath of the COVID 19 pandemic, be open to a new and different future. When you are ready to move forward—or even sideways—I hope you will allow this book to assist you in examining all the possibilities open to you as a professional nurse and determining how to make them happen for you.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do during this pandemic. As a profession, we nurses have fought hard—enduring both failures and successes. Sometimes it felt as though we moved two steps forward and then five steps back. Eventually, though, we helped turn the tide. We made a difference. To me, that is the embodiment of nursing—making our unique impact, individually and collectively, for the people who depend on us.



INTRODUCTION

Your career is analogous to the birth of a butterfly—

From egg to caterpillar, you are nourished and learn to navigate your surroundings—

From larvae to butterfly, you self-reflect, and you prepare to take flight—

As the butterfly with courage, vibrancy, and excitement is ready to soar—

It is time to step into your career and make your unique difference—

Fly high, don't be inhibited to take changes in flight, and make your impact—

The nursing profession and you will be that much better by the difference you make.

This is the second edition of *Take Charge of Your Nursing Career*. Since the first edition was published in 2010 by Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, the topic of career development and management, in all its many facets, has gained greater interest as a career-long process rather than something that only new graduates experience or that people consider when a new career opportunity becomes available. As the nursing profession continues to grow and evolve, professional nurses' career development and management must keep pace.

Sigma is leading in the effort globally to provide career development and management guidance to its members. Sigma's Career Center has a central presence at conferences, both in-person and virtually. The Career Center is the tent from which many opportunities flow, including but not limited to the Career Advice Forum on the Circle, many Sigma academies (which clearly focus on the expansion of one's career), and the various presentations delivered to assist members in their career growth.

The second edition of this book is another means of presenting (in a conversational, user-focused format) these topics that are so essential to developing, managing, and expanding one's career. The book also gives nurses—both members and non-members of Sigma—a “one-stop” career guide that addresses issues that will be relevant for the entirety of their career.

The essential theme of the book is the notion of career as a fluid process. A career is not stagnant or simply a job. It is a process that must be nurtured—constantly grown and managed. A career is an opportunity to find one's voice and use it to promote both the individual and professional impact of one's expertise. A career should be challenging, always giving way to more learning and mentoring opportunities. Career is a global concept; the intricacies of career development and management across the globe cannot be overlooked. A career journey ebbs and flows—one of the great characteristics of a professional nursing career. There are always options to consider on one's career path—opportunities to gain experience and expertise in diverse areas, often never considered by professional nurses.

Take Charge of Your Nursing Career provides the reader with a unique and distinct perspective on career development and management. It covers timely and relevant topics, strategies, tips, and examples for professional nurses to use to develop and manage their careers from beginning to end. It also provides resources and websites that they can access as needed as they define their personal career trajectory. The topics discussed throughout the book are ones that professional nurses at all points on their career journey are asking about and dealing with in their careers, now and in the future. Professional nurses can turn to this user-friendly book through the entirety of their career.

Much of this version of the book was written during the COVID-19 pandemic, which as of this writing continues to affect our daily lives. Not surprisingly, in the shadow of the pandemic, career development and management has taken on even more importance for nursing professionals. New graduates are entering a nursing workforce in which expectations have been expanded and are quite challenging. Many more

experienced nurses have changed roles. Some nurses have seen their positions eliminated and are expected to change with the times, but without necessarily having the education, skill set, or “how to” approach needed to make those changes. *Take Charge of Your Nursing Career* addresses these issues and more.

The nursing profession and healthcare environment are different from when the first edition of this book was released. Today, nursing professionals across the globe and at each stage in their career consistently ask how to navigate, grow, and expand their careers; change their career trajectories; and develop, hone, and promote their nursing identities. Nursing professionals are focused on career-development and management areas that are far beyond writing a resumé or curriculum vitae. They are looking for career resources that apply to the many roles and challenges they face at all points and phases of their career. This book provides just that.

Each chapter begins with at least one vignette from a nurse I have met along my own career journey. These nurses reflect on something meaningful to them that relates to the focus of the corresponding chapter. The 11 chapters cover topics to help to nurses grow, maintain, sustain, and advance our careers. Chapters from the first edition have been updated and expanded to include content on resúmes, curriculum vitae, portfolios, educational advancement, professional development, and entrepreneurship. In addition, this new edition of the book covers subjects that were not addressed in the first edition that are timely and relevant to the world in which we currently live and work. They include mentorship, developing your nursing identity, international nursing, the impact and use of social media in our careers, expanding your reach with your voice, and work-life balance.

Take Charge of Your Nursing Career, Second Edition meets the needs of *all* professional nurses. Finally, we have a book that addresses the issues we face and the tools we can use for our entire career! For example:

- Nursing students and new graduates can use this book to obtain resources for resumé development and interviewing. They can also

use it in relation to the broader issue of their career development. For example, they can use the practical “hands-on” resources in this book to develop a career plan, to develop and manage a portfolio, and to market themselves. And they can obtain guidance on advancing their career through formal education and professional development.

- Professional nurses who have been in practice for 5 to 10 years can use this book to explore other opportunities within nursing and healthcare and to manage their career path and as they consider taking steps to alter their career trajectory. Practical information on what steps to take will be most helpful to these nurses as they consider new experiences to expand their careers.
- Mid-career nurses who want to change or advance their careers—perhaps by obtaining additional education, progressing to a more advanced nursing position, pursuing international opportunities, considering positions outside their comfort zone, or attempting entrepreneurship—will find information in this book that addresses their questions. Specific areas of interest to mid-career nurses include but are not limited to mentorship, finding their voice, and expanding their reach. Chapters that outline how to develop and maintain a resumé, curriculum vitae, and/or portfolio, and on marketing oneself (including behavioral interviewing), could also be of interest to this population of nurses, who may not have undergone such experiences earlier in their careers.
- Professional nurses who are late in their careers and may even have transitioned into retirement, but who want to continue to make a difference in the nursing profession by pursuing non-traditional nursing opportunities, will find applicable resources in this book. These include resources that pertain to mentorship and professional or political advocacy.

This book even addresses specific challenges facing international nurses—for example, obtaining licensure in the United States, practicing across the world, educational opportunities outside their home

countries, and mentorship. There is much here for nurses who want to expand to a more global practice in diverse countries and regions of the world.

In other words, *all* professional nurses, no matter what point on their career journey, are the audience for *Take Charge of Your Nursing Career*. There is something for everyone, from the student to the new graduate, from the emerging-career to the mid-career nurse, to the later-career nurse. This readable, conversational, and practical book is for Sigma members and non-members, from all corners of the globe. It presents common questions, answers, and resources that nurses can use as they develop, manage, maintain, grow, advance, and elevate their careers.

Your career is a path will have ebbs and flows, winding roads and curves—sometimes expected, but often unexpected. Take each turn as a learning experience. Both positive *and* negative experiences provide us with valuable lessons that we can use as we manage our careers. As I learned on my own career journey, the unexpected change in a career path often turns out to be the best thing that could have happened to you—opening new doors, providing new and challenging experiences, and taking you to places you never imagined. I hope that as you read *Take Charge of Your Nursing Career*, you will find invaluable information that you can use as you travel your own career journey. I also hope that your journey is as full of excitement and fulfillment as mine has been.

Remember: No one individual travels their career journey alone. I certainly have not. So, reach out to others—including me if you need some guidance or advice. And always strive to be that butterfly that soars. Be willing to take and meet challenges, collaborate, disseminate, seek out experiences to grow and advance your career, and harness your uniqueness to make an impact that no one else could make in the exact same way.

I can't wait to see where your career journey takes you, and you take it!

—Lois

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL NURSES

“I have always wanted to practice somewhere other than the United States, where I grew up and was educated. I love to travel and was lucky enough during my undergraduate college years to go on two mission trips to Ghana and study abroad in London, England. During these vastly different experiences, I learned that nursing and healthcare are very much dictated by surroundings, availability of services, governmental policies and laws, but most importantly by people and their circumstances in life. The challenges presented to people across the world related to health and illness are areas that I want to address. The thought of practicing nursing as a global nurse is exciting to me. Now I just need to figure out how to make that happen.”

–E. C., MSN, ARNP-BC

“The world is large, and I like working in all of it when there is an opportunity for me. I currently work in the Middle East, but I have worked in the United States, where I am a citizen. I grew up in the northeast and went to undergraduate and graduate school in the south. Many years ago, an opportunity presented itself to work as a high-level administrator in a clinical organization and I took it. It has been an invigorating and challenging experience, but I am happy with the choice I made. Now I am considering making a change, but I am not sure what I want to do next or where I want to do it. Do I want to come back to the United States? Do I want to change my career trajectory? Are there interim steps or challenges I can take on while I try to figure this all out? I am not getting any younger.”

—M. E., PhD, MBA, RN

SOME BACKGROUND

The ability to work as a professional nurse, in all the many paths we can take in our careers throughout the world, is both exciting and challenging. Some nurses just want to spread their wings—for example, moving from the US to other countries around the world. Other nurses elsewhere in the world want to move *to* the US to practice and/or continue their education. Still others want to make an impact on global nursing and healthcare but not necessarily with a geographical move.

The most common questions from nurses who practice internationally or those who want to do so are related primarily to these areas. Whether these questions are posed to me or to others through social media, via email after connecting at conferences, through networking opportunities, or through Sigma Theta Tau International (Sigma) and its global reach via the Sigma Career Center and in-person and virtual events, nurses are seeking guidance on working and practicing internationally, however they define that concept for themselves.

CULTURAL IMPACT ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

For most international nurses, many of their common experiences are dictated by norms, cultural expectations, and organizational expectations in the country in which they practice. In a similar manner, how the inhabitants of a particular region perceive nursing and healthcare is often based on cultural norms and governmental policies and procedures. This is true for nurses across the globe.

It is incumbent upon you to research the area where you want to take your career journey so you are aware of what you should expect. This is true whether you are moving to North America or from North America to somewhere else in the world. You can find a lot of this type of information on country and embassy websites. But the most relevant information is often found by networking. Speak to peers, colleagues, friends, and members of relevant professional organizations who know the geographical area where you want to work to tap into their real-world knowledge and recommendations.

Tip

Do your due diligence in researching the regional, national, and organizational requirements and expectations when seeking a position, whether in clinical practice, academics, administration, government, or research.

If you are seeking a position abroad, frame your resumé, CV, and/or portfolio based on the requirements and expectations of the region and organization where you want to move and work to provide evidence that you understand the geographical location in which you are taking your career. (Refer to Chapters 1 and 2 for more information on writing your resumé, CV, and portfolio.) Of course, although the terminology and areas of emphasis in your resumé, CV, or portfolio might change depending on where you want to move, the purpose of these documents is still to present yourself as someone who brings unique qualities to the position for which you are applying.

“I have lived in the Philippines for all of my life. I will be graduating from nursing school with my BSN this year. I would really like to move to the US or Canada and practice there as a nurse. In my future I would also like to continue my education in one of those same countries. I have heard from a lot of friends that it is hard to get work abroad and that the process for moving and transitioning my education to North America is lengthy. I have a general idea as to what I have to do, from peers that have moved to the US and Canada, but now it is my turn and I want to be sure I do it all correctly.”

—K. H., BSN nursing student

STAYING PUT . . . BUT BECOMING MORE ATTUNED TO YOUR ENVIRONMENT

If you are developing, growing, and/or maintaining your career journey but don't want to move geographically, you, too, may have career questions that are specific to the area in which you live. Ask for guidance from your colleagues, your mentors, your employer and/or your organization's website, and fellow members of professional and clinical organizations. In some cultures, asking for advice—including whom you ask for guidance—may be dictated by cultural norms. Be sure to conduct your inquiry within these norms if you want to obtain answers to your questions.

RELOCATING TO NORTH AMERICA

The most common questions asked by nurses who were educated and/or work in countries outside of North America relate to their desire to move and work as a professional nurse in some capacity within the US or Canada. The primary issues related to such an international move involve having one's credentials evaluated and obtaining licensure as a registered nurse. Without addressing these first steps, any attempts to relocate to North America to work will be for naught.

As you begin the process of moving to North America, the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Students (<https://www.cgfns.org>) will be the primary source for answers to all your credential and certification evaluation questions. The FAQ page on this website (<https://www.cgfns.org/faq/>) can guide you through the process of receiving a comprehensive assessment of your records, whether you want to obtain your education in North America or you are already a nurse in another country and want to be licensed in the US or Canada. The “U.S. Nursing Licensure for Internationally Educated Nurses” page on the National Council of State Boards of Nursing website (<https://www.ncsbn.org/171.htm>) is another good source of information.

If you are a member of Sigma or other international professional organizations, talk to members within North America—particularly members who have made the same transition as you are planning—for additional tips and strategies. Those of you wishing to continue your education in North America can also find resources in International Studies departments at academic institutions.

SEEKING A POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP OR OTHER EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA

Professional nurses often inquire as to how to further their education in the US or Canada—including but not limited to seeking a post-doctoral fellowship. For anyone seeking such a position, research and networking are the keys to your success.

Find out which academic and/or clinical institutions are doing research in similar areas to yours. Are faculty and practitioners publishing on such research? If so, try to connect with the primary author via email to determine whether there are post-doctoral fellowships available—and most importantly, inquire as to whether these positions are open to international students.

In addition, ask colleagues or others in your research area who might assist you and where their colleagues have had successes. You can also use professional journals and other writings to find contacts with whom you might connect about a fellowship. But don't stop there. Ask to tap into *their* network of colleagues in research positions and see what you can find.

Tip

You never know where a tip on a fellowship will come from! Never underestimate the importance of getting your name and interests out in the public domain for others to see.

Social media platforms, especially those with a large international member base, can be invaluable in finding a fellowship you are interested in pursuing. Follow or link to others with similar research interests and then follow the groups and individuals that they follow. Developing your own network by connecting with others via social media can expand your reach across the globe.

Do not be afraid to ask for guidance and direction from others when seeking a post-doctoral fellowship. Networking may be the best strategy to find a position, particularly for international students. Who you know, and who *they* know, may play a significant role in your obtaining the position you are seeking.

RELOCATION ACROSS THE GLOBE

Relocating to another country or region of the world can lead to many opportunities and exciting challenges. But it also can lead to difficulties and dismay—especially if you have not done your research ahead of your move.

USEFUL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

If you need to find out whether a hospital or other type of organization requires a green card, visa, or similar, there are agencies that can assist you. Some countries have separate registration authorities that you can (or may be required to) contact. Here are a few good places to start:

- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (<https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Accreditation/>)
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (<https://nurseabroad.in/apply-for-nmbi-registration/>)
- Nursing and Midwifery Council of the United Kingdom (<https://www.nmc.org.uk/registration/search-the-register>)
- South African Nursing Council (<https://www.sanc.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SANC-Revised-guidelines-Foreign-Registration-2016-05-15.pdf>)
- Nursing Council of New Zealand (<https://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/IQN?WebsiteKey=fa279da8-a3b1-4dad-94af-2a67fe08c81b>)
- Nursing Council of Hong Kong (https://www.nchk.org.hk/en/the_nursing_council_of_hong_kong/registration_and_enrolment_requirements/index.html)

Be sure you know the specific requirements and expectations of foreigners working as professional nurses in the country of your anticipated move. Inquire within governmental agencies or embassies in that country for assistance. For your country of interest, you must have a strong grasp of basic information about visas, passports, and nursing licensure requirements (and how to obtain them); working as a foreigner; housing opportunities; and any specifics related to available positions and requirements. For example, do you need a sponsor to work in another country? If so, where does that sponsorship come from, and for how long?

To practice internationally, you must have at least an associate's degree in nursing or a bachelor's degree in nursing. You will also need experience—although how much experience will depend on the position you are applying for and in what country. In addition, you will need to provide proof of licensure on the NCLEX-RN. Finally, you will need to provide proof of the states you have worked in as well as your resumé showing evidence of your experience.

It is always helpful if you speak the language of the country you want to practice in, including slang and local dialects. Although people in many countries do speak some English, it is likely *not* their primary language. To practice nursing effectively and efficiently, and to function as a member of the healthcare team, you must be at least familiar with, and preferably fluent in, the local language—not just the language for daily living but medical language that is unique to your role. Learning the language also shows your respect for the culture and practices of your colleagues and patients and enables you to better integrate into society.

Note

Of course, many healthcare organizations provide translators, and you can certainly use them when needed, but your comfort level and independence as a licensed professional nurse will be enhanced if you can communicate with patients, families, and colleagues in their own language.

LEARNING THE LANGUAGE

One way to learn a language is to use language programs like Rosetta Stone—although these might not help you gain a grasp of medical language. For that, it's a good idea to ask someone at the organization where you will be employed if they can recommend any resources to learn the language of nursing and healthcare for their country. If you're still not comfortable with your command of the language when you arrive in your new country, take advantage of translation applications on cellphones and other devices until you can get up to speed.

If you want to pursue nursing opportunities in a country where there is no reciprocal licensure, there are other possibilities for employment. For example, in Japan, there is no comparable licensure for nurses not educated in Japan, so if you want to work as a nurse there, you will need to take that country's own licensure examination—in Japanese. If you lack the language skills to do so, you could consider nursing employment opportunities with the US government in Japan (or any number of other countries) as a civilian at a military base. To find out more about these types of positions, see USAJOBS (<https://www.usajobs.gov/>) or the Global Health Jobs and Opportunities page on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website (<https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/employment>). You might also find opportunities through the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service (<https://www.usphs.gov/>).

A good way to find jobs abroad is to network with other nurses from around the world. You can do this by joining an international nursing organization such as Sigma (<https://www.sigmanursing.org/>) or the International Council of Nurses (<https://www.icn.ch/>). As a nursing professional, you can also work with healthcare recruiters who specialize in placing nurses in positions abroad. These recruiters will often assist you not only with obtaining a nursing position abroad but also with housing, banking, and so on. Just be sure the recruiter is reputable. Do your due diligence to find out about them, including talking to others who may have used their services previously.

Do not let the excitement of moving to another part of the world to work cloud your judgment or keep you from asking all the relevant questions. Seek out others who have made similar moves and ask for their tips, strategies, and pro-con lists. Look for nurse leaders in country-specific professional organizations, academic

Tip

What you are seeking might not be available in the way you expect in the country where you want to make a move. So, be open-minded to all possibilities that might interest you, but also know that it is OK to change your mind once you have done your research and examined all the ramifications of making a move.

leaders, and/or leaders in clinical organizations for advice and guidance. You want your decision to lead to a positive and impactful experience—not one that you regret!

SOME FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

When considering a career change that involves an international move, it is incumbent on you to determine if everything is right for you: geographical location, time, position, employer, and circumstances. (Yes, as nurses, we always find the five rights!) To that end, here are some recommendations to help you determine if an international career move is an option you should consider:

- **Study abroad:** If you are still an undergraduate nursing student anywhere in the world and you have an opportunity to participate in a study abroad program—particularly in an area that you think you might want to live and work in at some point—enroll in that program. Study abroad programs, which are conducted by colleges and universities, are a great way to learn about a country and its healthcare system. If your program does not have a particular focus on nursing or healthcare, ask your faculty if they can assist you in arranging an experience in a clinical organization. Being immersed, even for a short time, in another culture and place may provide insight into whether this is something you want to consider once you have entered your nursing career.
- **Pursue international options within your educational program:** If you are further into your educational pursuits, inquire at your college or university if your program of study has an international component. For example, if you are working toward a dual master's degree in public health and nursing, find out what opportunities there are for international travel to care for clients or teach students. Every opportunity that you can partake in will give you the chance to see what your future might look like.

- **Take mission trips:** Participate in mission trips that are nursing or healthcare related. These are often conducted by schools of nursing or religious organizations. A religious organization is often the overarching sponsor or partner with a school of nursing or faculty member. No matter what point you are at in your nursing career, participating in a mission trip may lead you to determine that your future might lie in this geographical area or in the broader area of helping others through such mission trips.
- **Attend international professional conferences and participate in nursing or healthcare-related side trips:** Such opportunities can open your eyes to the possibilities for your future and how you might be able to use your unique abilities and characteristics to make an impact in a particular circumstance or country. If no official side trips are available during an international conference, connect with members of that country's chapter to seek out opportunities that they might be able to arrange for you or for a group.
- **Volunteer with international humanitarian organizations:** Contact Doctors Without Borders (<https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/>), Nurses Without Borders (<https://nwbfoundation.org/>), and other humanitarian organizations where you can volunteer. These service opportunities can not only provide you with the great feeling of helping others but also give you a window into global opportunities that might be of interest to you.
- **Network:** Tap into colleagues, peers, and mentors who live and/or work internationally to find an opportunity that is of similar interest to you. You can connect with people through your current employer, your personal or professional network, professional organizations, or social media, just to name a few. The more information you can gather from individuals who are where you want to be—in location or position—the more informed decision you can make.

One final tip: Be careful when inquiring about or making an international career move. Make sure you are asking questions and obtaining

information from reputable representatives, organizations, and sites, particularly on the internet. Double- and even triple-check the information you receive. Make direct contact with embassies/governmental agencies, potential employers, and agencies that assist with licensure, certification, and similar tasks. Making an international career move can be one of the best and most fulfilling decisions you will ever make. Just be sure to dot all your i's and cross all your t's!





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