I want to work in a hospital but I keep hearing I need experience. Where can I get experience if no hospital is hiring new graduates?

The economy has always created significant ebbs and flows with RN hiring. When I finished nursing school, the unemployment rate was even higher than it is today, but I eventually was hired by a hospital. Don’t give up! If you make good career choices, you will eventually get opportunities for hospital employment.

Right now, focus on getting good hands-on patient care experience. Some are getting jobs at smaller rural hospitals or exploring options with the military. This will not be practical for everyone, however. If you need to stay local, your initial RN experience can happen in a number of settings. My recommendation is for LTC or transitional care (TCU). The advantages are:

- Exposure to patients with broad scope of clinical diagnosis
- Opportunities to develop strong clinical assessment skill
- Developed time management skills by caring for multiple patients at a time
- Leadership opportunities

I don’t know anything about the long term care facilities in my area. Where can I find more information?

Medicare has a website that enables consumers to view and compare quality data for nursing homes. Go to [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) then click on Nursing Homes under the Resource Locator tab. You can narrow the search by county, zip code or by facility name. This site provides quite a bit of information to help you identify where to target your job search.

I worked as a LPN, does that make a difference?

We recognize LPN experience as valuable healthcare experience. However, because the role and responsibilities of an RN in an acute care setting are significantly different than an LPN, we are not making exceptions to the one year rule for LPNs at this time.

Are you saying that you will hire me when I apply with one year of RN experience in LTC?

No, it’s not quite that simple. We are currently getting an average of 40 applicants for one RN position. Recruiters and hiring manager will first consider applicants with clinical experience that closely matches the posted position. With this current ratio of applicants per position, there will likely be applicants with recent hospital experience. When the healthcare economy recovers fully there will be many hiring managers willing to consider applicants without acute care experience

The other factor that comes in to play is that RNs at three of our hospitals (Bethesda, St. Joseph’s and St. John’s) are members of a collective bargaining unit. Internal applicants that are applying for contract positions will be given hiring preference per their contract.

What can I do to improve my chances of getting hired to a hospital with my LTC or home care experience?

- If you have an AD begin to work on your BSN completion.
- Seek out opportunities with your current employer to expand your role as fully as possible.
- Offer to join (or better yet, lead!) committees (e.g. quality, safety, infection control)
- Identify gaps in your knowledge and demonstrate ownership by researching and developing a staff in-service or training packet. Work in partnership with your staff education director on this.

I have an associate’s degree in nursing. Will this matter once I have my one year of RN experience?

Many AD prepared nurses are working in acute care facilities. However nursing research demonstrates that clinical outcomes and job satisfaction are improved when care is provided by BSN/BAN prepared RNs. In a competitive job market, applicants with BSN/BAN have a definite advantage.

Any other suggestions?

- Be selective about who you list as references on your resume. Listing managers, directors (superiors) says that you are confident that your work is respected and they will give you a positive reference.
- Find ways to leverage your recent work experience. If you’ve been working with primarily orthopedic post-op patients in a TCU, consider applying for orthopedic medical surgical positions. Apply only for positions where you meet the minimum qualifications. If the job posting states “one year of labor and delivery experience required,” a recruiter cannot consider you unless you have at least one year of L&D.

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