

Nursing schools won't meet future health care demand: profs

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EDMONTON - Colleges and universities are unlikely to graduate enough nurses to meet the demand in the coming years.

Roy Romanow's report on health care last week recommended an increased role for nurses, but the schools say they don't have enough instructors to train more nurses.

Genevieve Gray, dean of the faculty of nursing at the University of Alberta, said schools aren't spending enough money to train the new instructors who will be needed to replace those who are leaving.

"Thirty per cent of this faculty, which is one of the largest in Canada, will retire within the next 10 years. That's our leading professors, research teams and so on who'll go," said Gray. Across the country, schools are facing hundreds of vacancies in their post-graduate programs.

"You have an aging faculty force who are getting older and worn out because they've been carrying a very heavy load for the last five, 10 years," said Wendy McBride of the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing.

A shortage of instructors is just one of the problems. There are also not enough spaces available for the on-the-job training nursing students need.

"As the hospitals are focusing on acute care and nursing staff is stretched and overworked, they don't have time to supervise students in the clinical setting," said McBride.

Some studies predict a shortfall of 100,000 nurses in Canada in the next 10 years.

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Written by CBC News Online Staff

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