Too few academics affects all nurses

Why are global shortages of skilled nursing academics an issue? Nursing academics are often seen as separate from clinical practice, located in universities, but they educate and prepare the next generation of nurses, provide postgraduate specialist nursing education and lead nursing research. They do this in isolation from clinical nurse leaders, to lead and deliver in the tertiary sector.

When there is a workforce shortage, a focus on recruitment and retention is essential. To attract nurses away from clinical into academic careers the benefits of career change need to be explicit. For retention, the transition period and job satisfaction must be considered to ensure that staff are happy in their new role.

Moving into academia from clinical nursing is a challenging transition. Despite their clinical expertise, nurses are often ill-prepared for the teaching, research and administrative tasks involved.

As a profession we need to recognise and value the range of different skills required of academics beyond clinical expertise. Developing strong skills in evidence-based teaching and learning, research and scholarship are vital to career progression in academia and require a range of educational opportunities.

Novice academics need support to develop research skills and expertise. Although there are growing opportunities to develop research skills alongside clinical practice, many new academics have limited exposure to research.

Helping the next generation of nurse academics does not require much effort but can mean so much to nurses early in their academic career. Creating opportunities to collaborate on existing research can be a vital step in supporting them to thrive and remain in post.

Retaining and supporting new academics to grow in experience is vital to support workforce capacity. All academics must create positive working environments to foster professional growth and a positive culture.