## Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in nursing programs: an offer to reduce workforce shortage among nursing.

Oral Presentation [Practice-related]

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**Background**: Health workforce shortage is a relevant diffused issue and the need of retention strategies is a main challenge in many countries. Providing training, education and research opportunities for a life-long career and attracting nurses through the extension of practice and advanced roles, are among main retention strategies suggested by literature. Several studies have investigated the effects of Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing [RN-BSN] programs on students' skills development and personal transformation. Critical thinking ability, communication skills, leadership ability, participation in and use of research and changes in self and in practice, are some of the major identified outcomes.

**Problem**: In Switzerland in 2013, only 54% of working-age healthcare-professionals were active professionally, without differences between German, French and Italian speaking parts. Therefore, also in Southern Switzerland, the need of retention strategies is relevant.

**Aims:** To develop a nursing educational program, which can enhance knowledge, skills and competencies thus contributing to promote nurses· retention in Ticino.

**Procedure**: A RN-BSN program has been proposed in the academic year 2017-18, for the first time in Ticino. Learning principles, which valorise students' centrality and their role and experience, guided the program construction. In particular adult learning principles and reflective practice were adopted to promote a continuum among students' experience, educational background, actual role and process of professional growth. Special and constant attention was paid so that teaching activities could promote continuous integration between practice and new contents. All students were met before starting the educational course to understand their motivations and characteristics to build on. Teaching modalities [i.e. blended learning courses] and organizational adoptions [i.e. flexibility] were assumed to facilitate students· participation and learning-working conciliation.

**Results/Experiences**: Ten students are involved in the RN-BSN program. The majority works in a hospital setting [N=6l and are staff nurses [N=6l. Four students graduated more than 15 years ago while six students less than 5. Increasing competencies and improving clinical roles are motivations for the RN-BSN program, declared by all students in the pre-course interviews. After two months, in a focus group, students confirmed that the course was allowing them to integrate learning and practice and was answering their expectations. Thereafter in different moments, students have confirmed the educational program's positive effect on improving knowledge, skills and competencies in a continuum with their background, experience and role. Some students fostered this experience with other colleagues and Institutions expressed appreciation for the program.

**Discussion**: Experience and education are two important factors for promoting nursing accountability and responsibility thus supporting quality of care and nurses· retention. Opportunities for enhancing skills and knowledge are important factors that can influence retention and incentives to remain. Students underline the importance of RN-BSN programs to enhance a

professional growth and consider them an opportunity to extend practice.

**Conclusion**: Considering the current evolving healthcare system, it is more and more relevant to develop educational offers that meet system needs and may constructively influence nursing practice and health-professional satisfaction, thus contributing to promote nurses· retention.