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INDUSTRY INSIDER: HEALTH CARE

Arab-American nursing group aims to expand into New Jersey

An advocacy group of Arab-American nurses is expanding beyond Michigan and trying to open chapters in other states, including New Jersey.

The group encourages Arab men and women to consider nursing careers to help reduce the national nursing shortage.

"We've had some inquiries from nurses in New Jersey, and we are hopeful of starting a chapter," said Rose Khalifa, president and founder of the organization. "But we need more interest."

The group recently changed its name to reflect the effort to go national, and is now called the National American Arab Nurses Association.

Khalifa said the organization, which began in 2003, educates

Arab-Americans about the need for nurses, as well as the educational requirements for the job.

"We educate them on Western medicine and what Western nursing is all about," Khalifa said.

She said many Arab-Americans are not aware of the education required to become a nurse in the United States.

She said the group also is working to open chapters in California, Florida, Chicago and Baltimore.

"We want to eliminate the stigma and misunderstanding surrounding the profession," Khalifa said. "Some people think anyone with a lab coat is a nurse. People do not quite know what the nursing profession is all about."

The group is trying to get grants and gives out scholarships

to nursing students.

The association joins other groups that focus on Hispanic and black nurses. These groups help diversify the nursing profession, which is 93 percent Caucasian, said Andrea Higham, director of the Johnson & Johnson Campaign for Nursing's Future.

"You want the demographic of the country to marry with the demographic of the nursing profession to provide culturally competent care," she said.

She said immigrants frequently come from countries where nurses are not looked upon as certified and highly educated professionals, and so educating them about nursing in the United States is necessary to attract them to the profession.

"One big focus of our cam-

paign is to encourage more minorities to get involved," Higham said.

Research grant

The National Institutes of Health has granted \$500,000 to a New Brunswick researcher working to develop artificial knee cartilage.

Charles Gatt, chairman of orthopedic surgery at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is developing a bio-engineered tissue replacement implant for badly damaged cartilage.

The grant covers bio-materials and laboratory work on a design to develop and create soft-tissue cartilage replacement.

The medical school is part of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

— Carol Ann Campbell