

Supporting Successful Transitions to Clinical Practice for Graduate Nurses: Creating a Learning Community

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Topic: Academic Nursing: Excellence & Innovation

Category: Quality Improvement/Evidence-Based Practice Project

Abstract

Background/Introduction

The readiness-for-practice gap for graduate nurses is well documented. A committee of three practice partners and two nursing programs partnered to explore the issues specific to the local area. The goal was to identify skill deficits for development prior to graduation and attract students to the local healthcare facilities serving rural and underserved populations.

Purpose

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the evolution and outcomes of the nursing externship course developed to address the issues identified by the practice partners.

Methods or Processes/Procedures

14 students were selected and employed by the practice partner for a 10-week summer nurse externship experience. The clinical partner paired students with experienced nurse preceptors on units throughout the facility. Students were compensated through salary and course tuition reimbursement. Academic course enrollment allowed students clinical practice opportunities. The course was developed and led by 2 nursing faculty. Students were required to maintain a clinical log and written reflections on a different nursing topic each week. Two seminars were held for the students to share collective experiences.

Results

A minimum total of 324 hours were completed by the nurse externship group during the 10-week summer program. All received offers to continue as nurse assistants. 7/14 students accepted. We will be following the cohort of students through their senior year to look at confidence in clinical practice and employment at graduation.

Limitations

Only one of the three clinical practice sites implemented the externship program. Student enrollment was limited by the site to one per unit. Students had to register and pre-pay for tuition to participate in the externship.

Conclusions/Implications for Practice

The significant additional hours of clinical experience in the student nurse role allowed for focused and concentrated professional growth. Post-experience survey data resulted in 100% response of a 'very positive' experience. Students reported increased confidence and positive overall results for program and course.

Biography

Ms. Reuther has been a nurse for 30 years with experience in adult and neonatal critical care, cardiac step down, and maternal/child care. As an educator, she began 15 years ago, eventually assuming the simulation coordinator role for the undergraduate nursing program. Under her leadership, Decker College became the first nursing program in NYS to be accredited by the Society for Simulation in Healthcare. Currently, she manages the Innovative Simulation and Practice Center at Decker College, guiding the health science programs in simulation curriculum development and implementation. As well, she is leading the interprofessional education program for the University.

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