

Project Title: Primary Care Nursing Minor and Concentration

Description of Program Innovation and Outcomes

The University of Indianapolis School of Nursing developed a minor and concentration option in primary care as well as revised the BSN curriculum to incorporate increased clinical exposure to primary nursing care. These initiatives aimed to create sustainable solutions to address the primary care nursing workforce pipeline by better preparing students in population health and the management and prevention of chronic disease while collaborating within interprofessional teams.

The curricular changes were driven by an array of factors within the current healthcare system as well as barriers within nursing education. The health care needs of the American population are continually evolving. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 40.3 million residents were 65 years of age or older in 2010. By July 1, 2019, this population had grown to more than 54 million. Meanwhile, an increasing number of Americans report having one or more chronic diseases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that chronic diseases were seven of the top ten causes of death (CDC, 2021).

Health care reform, the Affordable Care Act and changes in reimbursement models from the standard fee for service to value based contracting have emphasized a significant change in care delivery models that opened the door for utilization of registered nurses within primary care. Despite this need, only 9.7% of Registered Nurses are employed in ambulatory care settings (Smiley et al., 2021). Healthcare settings need to find a way to successfully integrate new RN graduates directly into primary care practices while nurse educators need to increase curricular content that increases competencies in primary care and readiness for practice for settings outside of acute care.

The Macy Foundation summarized some of the challenges that limit primary nursing care preparation (Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, 2016). Lack of primary care content in curricula, limited faculty and preceptor support, and logistical challenges associated with community-based clinical sites were identified as barriers in nursing education. The recommendations highlighted the need to elevate primary care content for pre-licensure students and incorporate interprofessional education and teamwork in primary care nursing curricula.

Demonstrates Advancement of Professional Nursing Education

The University of Indianapolis in partnership with Community Health Network began work to address the nursing education deficits. A curriculum gap analysis was completed based on the Scope and Standards of Practice for Professional Ambulatory Care Nursing (2017) to identify student learning needs. Gap analysis results identified learning needs in the areas of roles and professional standards for ambulatory care

nursing, information technology and communication, as well as coordination of care and transition management.

A team of nursing faculty with input from clinical partners developed three nursing elective courses including didactic and 50 clinical hours per course. Students in the BSN program that complete all three nursing electives are eligible for a concentration in primary care nursing. Select supporting social science courses are also required to complete the minor in primary care nursing. In addition, all nursing students are exposed to primary care content and clinical experiences in the newly revised Transitional Care in Primary and Population Health course. Students have an increased focus on care coordination, chronic disease management, transitional care nursing and disease prevention, telehealth nursing, as well as, mental health and substance use screening and treatment through these added opportunities.

Student confidence in caring for the primary care population is assessed in each course. To date, 47 students have completed at least one primary elective course, and nine students are on track to complete the minor in the fall, 2021 semester. A total of 130 students have completed the newly revised community health course. This innovative approach will support closing the gaps in primary care nursing competencies and will better support clinical practice by enhancing student knowledge and skills while increasing availability of clinical experiences.

Faculty Team Involvement

Through the development and implementation of each of the courses in the concentration and minor, collaboration with faculty from various programs and disciplines was integral. Guest speakers were incorporated into courses through our practice partner, Community Health Network, to discuss topics such as Center of Hope, safety and infection control, informatics, and the future of primary and ambulatory care nursing. Advanced Practice Nursing faculty from the Graduate Program contributed to a panel discussion on ethical and legal issues in primary care. A PhD prepared faculty member from the Center for Aging department is assisting with the evaluation and data collection processes. The required, pre-existing Transitional Care in Primary and Population Health is co-taught by a faculty member who maintains a Master's degree in Public Health and a nursing faculty member with doctoral preparation. Students have appreciated the perspectives of the various disciplines and faculty as well as learning about first-hand experiences. Students rank the interprofessional experiences very highly on the course evaluations.

Catalyst for Change and/or Educational Mission of the Institution

The courses in the minor and concentration are available to traditional, accelerated, and BSN completion students. The School of Nursing (SON) mission commits to “developing competent, caring, and compassionate servant leaders who provide holistic care in a complex and changing health care environment” (University of Indianapolis School of Nursing, 2020, p. 1). Creating and implementing the minor and concentration curriculum has demonstrated the leadership of our SON in the profession of nursing education because it is one of the first nursing specialty minors in primary care offered in the state of Indiana. It also has provided a pipeline of new graduate nurses who are better equipped to support primary care needs, which is consistent with the SON mission.

Consistency with AACN’s Mission and Vision

The development and implementation of the primary care minor and concentration also aligns with the AACN’s mission and vision by offering innovative educational experiences that prepare nursing students to practice in diverse healthcare settings and to transform the healthcare environment.

Replication and Dissemination

As a team, we have disseminated the Primary Care Minor at several conferences over the last couple of years. We presented at the American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing conference for two consecutive years, Indiana Center for Nursing and Indiana League for Nursing, as well as a symposium offered by Community Health Network and the University of Indianapolis. In these presentations, we shared our clinical partnership, the development and implementation process for the minor and concentration curriculum, and the evaluation and outcomes accomplished to date. Sharing this information allows other institutions to replicate the Primary Care Minor. Many institutions have requested specific information on the three courses as well as the clinical experiences with each course.

Sustainability

As a HRSA grant recipient, the initiative was developed to ensure sustainability would be possible upon conclusion of the grant. Processes are in place to manage long term clinical and preceptor placements in primary care. Primary care practice partner commitments, preceptor training, and curricular content were implemented and have been replicated across four semesters. Student interest continues to grow as academic advisors, faculty, and school of nursing marketing events promote the unique opportunity for a nursing minor in primary care.

References

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