IDENTIFYING BARRIERS TO A SUCCESSFUL NURSE RESIDENCY PROGRAM
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ABSTRACT
Zinn, Guglielmi, Davis, and Moses (2012) report the nursing shortage will grow to an astounding one million Registered Nurses (RNs) by the year 2020 if the problem is not adequately addressed. The nursing shortage, coupled with the aging population and high patient acuity, places further stress on an already fragile healthcare system. New graduates are an employment pipeline for hospitals and represent the largest pool of nurses available for recruitment in the nation (Weidling, 2011). However, the complexity of the hospital environment and education-to-practice gap often results in stress and dissatisfaction for new graduate nurses. High turnover rates for new graduate nurses in the first 12 months are reported to range from 35% to 65% (Pittman, Herrera, Bass, & Thompson, 2013). The Institute of Medicine’s (2010) report, The Future of Nursing, recommends the implementation of nurse residency programs to facilitate transition to practice. Nurse residency programs are designed to provide emotional support, establish clinical competence, and retain new graduates (Weidling, 2011). The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) has only accredited 14 nurse residency programs in the country. These programs have improved graduate nurse satisfaction and decreased turnover. A graduate residency program of a Southeastern academic medical center was compared to the 2008 CCNE Standards for Accreditation of Post-Baccalaureate Nurse Residency Programs (CCNE, 2008). The gap analysis evaluated program faculty, institutional commitment and resources, curriculum, and program effectiveness. The analysis revealed a solid curriculum and opportunities for improvement in data collection, graduate attendance, resource allocation, and the faculty organization. Rosswurm and Larrabee’s (1999) evidence-based practice model has been proven to accelerate practice change within organizations and practice settings, and was used as a framework for this project. Considering the nursing shortage and aging population, nurse executives must support nurse residency programs to retain the graduate RN workforce, which are essential to quality staffing and financial efficiency.

PROBLEM
High levels of new graduate turnover have serious consequences related to quality patient care, as well as financial implications for hospitals.

PURPOSE OF NURSE RESIDENCY PROGRAMS
• Bridge the education to professional nursing practice gap
• Support the development of competent professionals who will deliver excellent care and leadership at the bedside
• Improve quality patient care by offering additional training and support to new graduates
• Develop strategies to integrate evidence based practice
• Prepare an individual career map which supports life long learning and professional nursing

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT
Assess the design of the nurse graduate residency program of a Southeastern academic medical center compared to the 2008 Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) Standards for Accreditation of Post-Baccalaureate Nurse Residency Programs (CCNE, 2008).

Four Standards to Evaluate Program Quality
1. Program Faculty
2. Institutional Commitment & Resources
3. Curriculum
4. Program Effectiveness

Rosswurm and Larrabee’s (1999) evidence-based practice model has been proven to accelerate practice change within an organization.

FRAMWORK
1. Assess need for practice change
2. Link problems with literature review
3. Synthesize literature
4. Design practice change
5. Implement & evaluate practice change
6. Assess & maintain practice change

ASSUMPTIONS
• The design of the current nurse residency program is not effective in retaining new graduate RNs
• The hospital’s chief nursing officer and residency coordinator will support the completion of the gap analysis compared to best practice evidence
• Personnel associated with the residency program will be available to answer questions

GAP ANALYSIS
Standard I - Program Faculty
• Faculty are educationally prepared and credentialed
• Clear definition of roles and responsibilities needed, reorganization necessary
• Professional development related to residency programs needed
• Program faculty must be evaluated for performance in achieving program goals and outcome

Standard II - Institutional Commitment and Resources
• Adequate facilities
• Insufficient allocation of fiscal resources
• Documents and publications related to program need updating
• No accountability for nurse resident participation and completion of the program

Standard III - Curriculum
• Curriculum centered on leadership, patient outcomes, and professional role
• Enhance alignment of CCNE objectives and curriculum

Standard IV - Program Effectiveness
• Program satisfaction data is collected from residents
• Lack of data linking program effectiveness and outcomes
• Written evaluation plan needed to describe how data are systematically collected and analyzed
• Program data and outcomes should be shared between the hospital and the nursing academic partner

SETTING
A southeastern Magnet and Joint Commission accredited academic medical center

DATA
• 312 new graduates hired in FY 2013
• 78 of the 312 (25%) were no longer employed after one year; potential savings over $4 million
• Only two of the graduates completed the residency program in FY 2013

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS
• The nursing shortage, aging population, and high graduate nurse turnover rates are serious concerns for hospitals
• A systematic review of the literature supports the benefits of nurse residency programs to help close the education-to-practice gap and increase new graduate retention
• Residency programs demonstrate positive effects for nurse combat, job satisfaction, self-confidence, and turnover intent
• Nurse residents report an increased ability to use evidence based practice, manage conflict, and communicate effectively with physicians and other health team members
• Managers report a greater percentage of nurse residents participate in nursing committees and projects than experienced staff
• Investing in a residency program assures quality nurses and increases retention

REFERENCES

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