New Graduate Nurse Preceptor Program: Partnering with Academia

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ABSTRACT

Background: Today’s nursing shortage requires administrators and educators to direct considerable resources toward mentoring and retaining new graduate nurses. Turnover rates during the first year of practice range from 35-60% and can cost an organization $42,000-64,000 for each nurse vacancy. Rapid immersion into practice causes many new graduates to feel overwhelmed, unsupported, and disillusioned. Precepting new graduates has been shown to increase job satisfaction and long-term retention. Building a strong preceptorship program requires careful training for those nurses who volunteer. These nurses typically are selected for their strong clinical skills. However, they may not possess the unique skills required to guide, motivate, and evaluate the new clinician – all skills that nursing faculty learn and practice with their students in each clinical rotation. Partnering experienced nursing faculty with preceptor trainers brings unique expertise to the preceptor program.

Purpose: The purpose was to partner experienced nursing faculty with hospital educators in a 230 bed acute care hospital to enhance an existing preceptor program. The aim was to promote preceptor and preceptor trainer competency.

Methods: The nursing faculty member partnered with the hospital educator to revise the existing program. The agenda that was developed included best practices to motivate, teach, and evaluate. Both individuals were present at each training session, with the faculty member modeling interactive simulations on motivation techniques, communication, and evaluation strategies. Strategies for providing positive and negative feedback that challenged the new nurses while promoting their competency and confidence were demonstrated.

Results: Paired t-tests of preceptor perceptions of ability to motivate, guide, educate, and evaluate new graduates revealed significantly increased confidence in each of these areas. The hospital educator found the partnership immensely beneficial, especially in portraying the perceptions and expectations of the new nurse, reflecting on nursing theories of how nurses gain and synthesize knowledge, and developing strategies for an interactive and professional learning environment.

Conclusions: Preceptors have the ability to shape, nurture, influence, and support new graduate nurses. Partnering with experts in education can enhance the preparation and support for these preceptors and ultimately facilitate a strong and supportive transition into practice for the new graduate.