Problem:
Committee members making decisions that affect nursing care leads to not only nursing
dissatisfaction but risks patient safety. Nurses are at the bedside. They are on the frontline
to the problems they face and should be a part of the solution.

Evidence:
The article "Creating a culture of service excellence: empowering nurses within the
shared governance councilor model" in Health Care Manager states "The shared decision-
making structure was the vehicle used to integrate the 14 standards of Magnet Nursing to
create a culture of high-quality nursing practice to achieve optimal outcomes. Nursing
excellence was further verified by achieving outstanding results in patient, physician, and
nurse satisfaction scores and nurse retention." When the nurses at SAVAHCS saw that
management was making changes from the evidence based recommendation the Unit
Council made, involvement increased. The nurses began to take ownership of patient
goals and outcomes.

Strategy:
A unit based council can enrich our nursing practice. Shared governance is a way for
nurses to have a voice in their nursing practice and patient care using evidence based
practice. Establishing unit based councils is a way for SAVAHCS and management to
recognize the professional status of the nurse. Our ICU Unit Council helps nurses to
transform their frustrations into accomplishments. We started by trying to recruit nurses
for the unit council with not much luck. After sharing our vision and ensuring the nurses
that this wasn’t just another committee we got a small handful to commit. First item on
the agenda was the Mission Value Vision Statement. Once the nurses realized they had
an avenue to make change, they could have a voice, the unit council blossomed into a
strong group.

Practice:
The first and most important step is to base the unit councils on the principles of evidence
based practice. With the desire to fulfill the vision of SAVAHCS to use shared
governance we establish unit based councils on different units. With Magnet status being
the goal for most top hospitals unit based councils is a great start at shared governance.
The nurses either brought a problem before the council or management would. They
would meet monthly unless there was a project to be worked on. The council would then
form subgroups and meet weekly. Using evidence based practice principles, they would
present a proposal to management.
Evaluation:
Establishing Unit Councils has increased staff nurse involvement: in their practice, attitudes, quality of work, commitment, the ability to influence patient care, and nursing standards. Leadership skills and knowledge and nursing practices were significantly improved. The most important outcome was achieved by improving standards of care in which patient outcomes improved.

Results:
The unit council represents day and night shift as well as new graduates to senior nurses. The unit council’s goals include improving patient care standards, employee satisfaction, and patient safety. Changes are made using evidence based practice to improve healthcare. We found that instead of nurses resisting change they embrace change. When nurses learn to base practice on evidence based knowledge they understand why the change needs to be made.

Recommendations:
The key to success is the commitment from management to make appropriate changes according to the evidence presented to them by the Unit Council. Here at SAVAHCS, we believe that nurses want to give excellent patient care. They only need the opportunity to do what is right. When we teach the nurses the principles of evidence based practice, we empower the nurses to thrive in excellence. We have all heard the saying “give someone a fish, you feed them a meal, teach them to fish, you feed them for a life time.”

Lessons Learned:
SAVAHCS nurtures a culture of caring. We value our veterans as well as our nurses. Our Unit Council empowers the nurses to make changes using evidence based practice. We improve patient outcomes as well as employee satisfaction. Through research, review of literature, and nursing involvement, a Unit Council can have an astonishing affect on patient care.

Bibliography:

