Developing a Culture of Inquiry through a Nursing Research Fellowship
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**Problem:** The culture in nursing practice needs to change from one that emphasizes rituals, traditions, isolated unsystematic clinical experience and ungrounded opinions to one that encourages inquiry and uses research and evidence-based practices to provide effective patient care.

**Evidence:** A plethora of literature advocates the use of evidence-based practice since the Institute of Medicine’s publication, Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century¹. Schools of nursing are changing their curricula to advance a new model of nursing education that focuses on teaching research-based practice instead of the research process.² However, nurses employed in hospitals, educated under the old model, lack the education and knowledge that empowers one to question traditional nursing practices.

**Strategy:** The Nursing Research Fellowship (NRF) is a twelve month program that encourages a spirit of inquiry among staff nurses (RNs) and strives to develop an organizational culture of evidence-based nursing practice.

**Practice Change:** Select RNs are funded to participate in a formal structured program of education and mentoring in which they collaborate with experts to learn essential research and leadership skills and design and conduct a nursing research/evidence-based practice project.

**Evaluation:** RNs questioned nursing practices then learned research skills to design studies to evaluate the scientific merit of nursing practices, and the leadership skills to integrate evidence-based findings into nursing policies and procedures, and serve as a resource to unit staff and management.

**Results:** Projects designed by RNs include a: research study to determine significance of fluid restriction in the management of heart failure patients; project to determine the effectiveness of a nurse-driven pathway for post-surgical ACB patients; and project to compare blood glucose readings taken from different patient access points.

**Recommendations:** In the selection process consider the feasibility of the research idea and the availability of a content expert to mentor the RN.

**Lessons Learned:** A Nursing Research Fellowship is an effective way to build a culture of inquiry among practicing nurses.

**Bibliography:**