Creating a Climate for Inquiry at the Frontline of Patient Care
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Problem: Nurses enter practice with varying education levels presenting the profession with challenges - among these clinical decision making skills associated with evidence-based practice (EBP) and research. Many staff nurses are practicing with diplomas or associate degrees, and depending on their years of experience may not have been exposed to research and/or EBP concepts. Clinical inquiry is crucial to these processes.

Evidence: Ponder the volume of research, carried out by academicians, which frontline nurses do not read and thus has not made its way into practice. Yet, the use of best research evidence to inform clinical decision making empowers nurses to transform their practice.

Strategies leading to the Practice Change Program: The CNO and nursing leadership at this 258-bed, Magnet, community hospital took an innovative approach in hiring a research scientist to develop a research and EBP program for its nurses. A point-of-care model (1) involving teams of nurses, mentored by the program director or an experienced advanced practice nurse, was implemented.

Evaluation: Anonymous electronic surveys monitored nursing awareness and knowledge. External dissemination tracked CVMC nurse researchers’ contributions to the field.

Results: Approximately 20% of staff nurses participated in clinical research, and CVMC nurse researchers won 5 national awards for presentations and publication in less than 4 years. The use of best evidence in decision making increased from 49.3% (n=138, 2006) to 92% (n=138, 2009) among frontline staff.

Recommendations: Utilizing a program model that takes into account common barriers (2) voiced by nurses, e.g., lack of time, lack of resources, and lack of knowledge, is vitally important as is the support of nursing leaders who are responsible for allocating the resources required for creating a climate for clinical inquiry.

Lessons Learned: Frontline nurses demonstrated they were capable of making practice changes, with guidance. Practical clinical questions were asked and answered through systematic study in the absence of formal research training. CVMC is pioneering a workable solution to a profession-wide problem.

Bibliography