

INCREASING NURSING STAFF EDUCATION LEVELS AT WYOMING MEDICAL CENTER



Phyllis E. Schulz, RNC, MS

PROBLEM

- The purpose of the project is to increase the number of BSN nurses at Wyoming Medical Center by providing educational opportunities within the community for current AD nurses and others to obtain a BSN/MSN.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Research has indicated better patient outcomes when bedside nursing staff has a higher level of education. NDNQI data was used to identify a need for new opportunities for ADNs to obtain a BSN in a rural state with limited educational opportunities.

STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

- Plans to increase staff educational level were presented to and approved by management. Plans have been supported by all levels of management.
- The State of Wyoming is supporting the concept of Magnet status by providing \$250,000 to hospitals in the state for associated costs incurred in the Magnet journey. Wyoming Medical Center applied for the financial support and was granted the funding.
- WMC is using part of this state funding to support increased education. We are providing scholarships for ADNs to complete their BSN. The University of Wyoming offers the courses on-line so staff do not have to travel the 250 miles to the campus, because Wyoming has only one 4-year university, distance education is a significant issue in our state.
- We have also developed a relationship with the University of Wyoming to provide clinical nursing instructors and clinical sites at WMC for the BRAND Program (Bachelors Reach for Accelerated Nursing Degree) started in fall 2008. These students have a bachelor's degree in another area and can complete their BSN in 15 months.
- The Clinical Nurse Specialists are Adjunct/ Partnership faculty and are assigned to do Medical-Surgical Clinical rotations with the BRAND students, with the idea the students will be inclined to pursue employment with us when they graduate if they have an optimal clinical rotation.
- This program is beneficial by supporting the University program, using hospital salaried CNSs. We hope this continued partnership turns out to be advantageous to both the University and the Hospital.

EVALUATION

- We have not increased 2006 BSN numbers from 28%, but with 38 RNs enrolled in the Magnet Scholarship program and another 9 with other scholarships, we hope to reach our goal of 39% soon. Four of the 12 initial BRAND students have interviewed and been hired in 2009. Currently in 2009 we have hired 35% BSNs as opposed to last year less than 10%.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- It is difficult to employ high numbers of BSNs in a large rural state with only one 4 year program, which makes a BSN difficult to obtain.
- By partnering with the University of Wyoming and using on-line programs, we are increasing our BSN numbers.
- We plan on showing the staff improvements in patient care as our BSNs numbers increase