

# The Right Mix for Positive Patient Outcomes:

# A CUSTOM DESIGNED RN RESIDENCY PROGRAM & EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE INNOVATION



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## ABSTRACT

Newly hired graduate nurses are entering into a challenging, fast paced, acute care setting. With this transition from nursing student to “the nurse” comes much uncertainty about their new role and added responsibility. Our RN Residency Program was introduced as a grass roots program to provide learning opportunities that follow Benner’s pathway of taking a graduate nurse from a novice level to the level of advanced beginner within twelve months. The program integrates evidence-based practice (EBP) to emphasize professional development, nursing assessment skills and care, and critical thinking. In addition, each RN Resident has a “Coach” to serve as a mentor through their first year in clinical practice.

The average RN turnover rate in acute care hospitals is over 20% and 9.77% for Magnet designated facilities. Recruiting costs range between \$22,000 and \$64,000 per new nurse; adding as much as 5% to a hospital’s annual budget. Faced with these facts, retention takes on an increasingly important role in the acute care setting.

Our hospital identified a solution to improving retention among new nurses as well as fostering innovative EBP projects that would lead to quality patient outcomes with a unique, custom-designed RN Residency Program.

One year turnover dropped from 28.2% in 2007 to 5.7% among those who participated in the re-designed, EBP program in 2008. Year-to-date

(YTD) 2011 one year turnover is 1.5%. Average one year turnover for 2008-2011 is 2.7%.

Commitment to completing EBP projects went from 20% for the RN Residency group that graduated July 2008 to 100% in 6 months. 100% compliance has been sustained for all RN Residency groups that graduated in 2009 to 2011 YTD.

Our vision, design, and execution of the RN Residency Program has improved our ability to attract, train, and retain quality nurses, provide recent nursing school graduates with the hands-on assistance they need to gain proficiency in their profession, increase nurses’ satisfaction with their work, and increase commitment to the profession.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Our hospital identified a solution to ease the daunting transition from nursing graduate to professional nurse with a unique RN Residency Program. This superb program is designed to improve clinical competence, enhance critical thinking, mature professional practice behaviors, and promote patient safety innovations.

Our hospital’s RN Residency Program offers an added dimension of customization; sessions are tailored to meet the diverse needs of our new nurse population. While it is important to promote standardization across all participating departments, to assure quality clinical practice, it is equally vital to understand the needs of each individual nurse and respond to that need.

The nurses in the program become engaged to make a difference. The program and the content embedded revolve around evidence-based practice. EBP is the cornerstone of the growth and success for any organization, program, and team.



## STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

- Four RN Residency groups were created based on date of hire.
  - Group A: February, March, April, and May hires
  - Group B: June and July hires
  - Group C: August, September, and October hires
  - Group D: November, December, and January hires
- Nurses with less than six months nursing experience are automatically enrolled in RN Residency upon hire.
- The four groups meet once a month for six sessions from 8AM to 12PM, with coaching and mentoring continuing for one year.

### CONTENT OF THE PROGRAM

- Our RN Residency Program provides the content necessary for new nurses to expand their knowledge and skills set. The program provides a foundation for nurses to build confidence in various domains of nursing practice.
- Growth & Development
  - Professionalism
  - Shared Governance
  - Team Building
  - Delegation
  - Communication and Confidence
  - Crucial Conversations
  - Case studies on organizing your shift while caring for a full patient load
- Nursing Assessment Skills & Nursing Care
  - Pressure Ulcer Staging
  - Heart Sounds and Cardiac Assessment
  - Refractory Complex Regional Pain Syndrome
  - Holistic Nursing
- Expanding Critical Thinking Capacity
  - Sepsis
  - Interpreting arterial blood gases
  - Caring for the patient post general anesthesia
  - Caring for the patient with diabetes
  - Change in patient status: strategies and case presentations
  - Patient code situations
- Hands On
  - Mock Codes utilizing SimMan® technology
  - Ostomy Care
- Other topics include
  - Flight Nursing
  - Understanding Sentinel Events and Root Causes
  - Documentation to keep you out of the courtroom
  - Patient Safety Goals
- However, our program allows for flexibility. For example, though patient status and code review is touched upon, the group requested

- more. Thus, experts in the critical care field presented real case scenarios of situations where patient health status has declined and nursing actions to be taken.
- Our RN Residency program allows for future professional development and growth opportunities, not just the here and now. Hahnemann allows the door to be wide open so nurses may take advantage of moving into the future of our profession.
- For example, many of the nurses in one orientation group that were going to be a part of the Residency Program consisted of many critical care and emergency department nurses. These nurses requested to see a flight come in on our helipad. Wanting to provide a unique opportunity, that day MedEvac brought their flight and landed for the new nurses. They went through the steps of what it is to be a flight nurse and provided them the opportunity to speak with the pilot, the flight nurse, and EMT.



### COACHING AND MENTORING

- All RN Residents have nurses available to them to serve as a Coach through their first year in clinical practice. Coaching is an effective way to enhance performance while also acting as a resource and support system to the new nurse.
- An example of outstanding coaching involves an instance when one of the RN Residents was having concerns with time management. She tried to work on different shifts and with different preceptors but was continuing to experience the effects of time and patient care. Her coach was able to bring her in to shadow on the cardiac critical care unit. Allowing for this opportunity, the new nurse felt more one on one contact with patients. Her coach providing her with this opportunity led to her realizing she wanted to work on a nursing unit where she was able to have more interaction with her patients and provide holistic care on a greater level.
- Another example of exceptional coaching involves an instance when one RN Resident was able to build a solid foundation on a cardiac step-down nursing floor. However, her goal was to transition to an ICU to provide nursing care for patients requiring a higher level of care. She spoke with her Coach who guided her through the process of choosing an ICU that is the right fit for her and the importance of shadowing in the different intensive care units to obtain a real



- feel for how they flow. Once this was accomplished, the RN Resident was able to interview for an ICU position and has had a successful transition to the unit.
- Executive level nursing administration act as mentors by providing multiple vehicles of support and nurturing to the RN Residents.
- Senior administration meet with the RN Residents during their first session, provide an open door policy via any mode of communication, actively round on all nursing departments, and reinforce trust and confidence during their graduation.

### EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE (EBP)

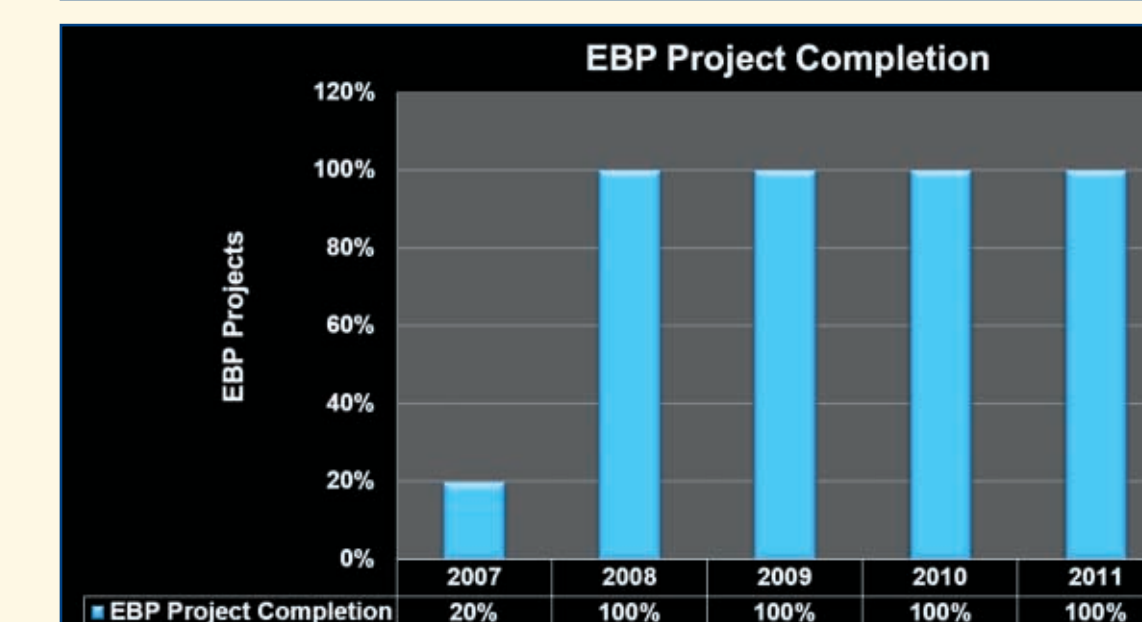
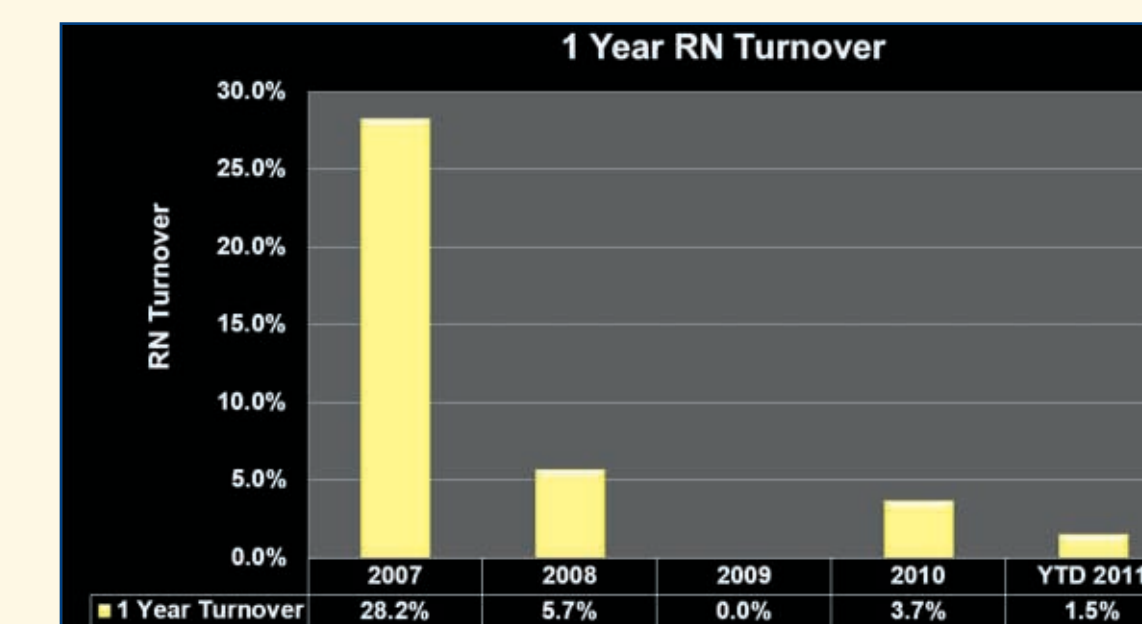
- The elements which are the core to evidence-based practice are discussed and demonstrated with examples of how our organization implements best practices from research leading to quality patient outcomes.
- The nurses become engaged to make a difference and structure their achieved foundation of knowledge, critical thinking and professional development into EBP projects presented at their RN Residency graduation.
- The EBP projects are placed on our hospital intranet system and accessible to all nurses.
- Since the inception of the revamped RN Residency Program in 2008, there have been a total of 11 groups graduating with 70 EBP projects presented. Some notable projects that have been transitioned into practice or that are currently being investigated further, include:
  - Team Nursing in the ED
  - Decreasing Blood Culture Contamination Rates
  - Safety Huddles
  - Ventilator Associated Pneumonia & New Oral Care Strategies
  - Moisture Related Skin Damage & Incontinent Diapered Patients
  - Therapeutic Hypothermia Post Sudden Cardiac Arrest
  - Specialized Lab Slips for Patient Codes & Rapid Responses
  - Progressive Upright Mobility
  - Facilitating the Pulled Nurse’s Experience
  - Family Witnessed Resuscitation

### REWARD AND RECOGNITION

- The RN Residents proudly present their evidence-based projects during a graduation breakfast celebrating their success in the program.
- The graduation is attended by the Chief Nursing Officer, Chief Executive Officer, Senior Nursing Directors, Nursing Department Directors, Magnet Program Director, and Department of Staff Education.
- Each RN Resident is recognized in a ceremony following the presentations in which they are presented with a certificate.



## RESULTS



## DISCUSSION

Our vision, design, and execution of the RN Residency Program has improved our ability to attract, train, and retain quality nurses. Our custom designed program provides recent nursing school graduates with the hands-on assistance they need to gain proficiency in their profession, increase nurses’ satisfaction with their work, and create a strong commitment to the profession. This innovative program can be created and implemented at any organization willing to commit in providing a smooth and successful transition of their new nurses.

Individuals new to the arena of nursing greatly benefit from a RN Residency Program because it is tailored to meet the needs of new graduate nurses. It provides for an environment that is all-inclusive of the elements to grow professionally and think critically.

Delivering the highest quality care to our patients is what we do everyday at Hahnemann University Hospital. Assuring that nurses have the competence and the confidence to perform their jobs in an ever changing and complex healthcare system is the focus of our RN Residency Program.

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