ABSTRACT

Purpose
To provide a passageway that fosters the development of critical thinking skills and nurse competence, promotes leadership thinking and nursing excellence, and facilitates a smooth transition to the organization’s culture.

Relevance / Significance
At a time of high patient acuity and complex care delivery, new nurses are entering an environment with many stressors and demands. In addition to attempting to successfully adapt to working on a different unit every four weeks, novice nurses face an overwhelming list of milestones that they are expected to accomplish in their first year of practice. If nurses are mandated to float from unit to unit, it is essential they are supported and competent in the areas to which they are assigned.

Strategy / Implementation
This program focuses on the nurse graduating from the Medical Nurse Residency Program, transitioning to the Medical Nurse Float Pool. Leadership approval was obtained pre-implementation. Nurse Managers and Staff Development Specialists offered suggestions for program content. Program curriculum was developed based on Patricia Benner’s Novice to Expert model, focusing on quality outcomes, evidence-based practice, patient safety, and development of leadership skills. A learning needs assessment is administered. Curriculum is implemented through monthly structured classes, which include interactive teaching methods, content customized to the unique needs of float pool nurses, and reflection to facilitate learning from practice. Monthly staff meeting are held to ensure nurses are informed on current organizational information. Time is set aside for discussions about patient care situations which serve as a vehicle to enhance socialization as well as reflect on clinical practice.

Evaluation
Eighteen nurses successfully transitioned from the float pool since 2011. Of those 18, 15 have remained on medical units. Two are current chairs of unit based Shared Decision Making Councils and eight are members of unit and/or system-wide councils. Seven have returned to learning needs assessment.

SIGNIFICANCE

Social Impact
To assure the hospital's survival, the impending staff shortages and clinical component of nurses transitioning from new nurse to professional nurse in today’s healthcare environment is a stressful experience, and being a nurse who floats from unit to unit adds additional stressors on an as needed basis for four weeks at a time. This program enhances the nurses’ ability to problem-solve and manage work-related stresses.

Economic Impact
Investing in educating nurses through this program offers important value-added preparation that will result in retention of this new group of nurses, thus decreasing turnover and cost to the organization.

Ethical Impact
Transitioning from nurse to professional in today’s healthcare environment is a stressful experience, and being a nurse who floats from unit to unit adds additional stressors on an as needed basis for four weeks at a time. This program enhances the nurses’ ability to problem-solve and manage work-related stresses.

EVALUATION

On-going communication with Nurse Managers and Staff Development Specialists
Evaluation tools at end of program
Nurse Manager Program Evaluation Tool
Float Pool Nurse Evaluation Tool
Retention data every 12 months

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of this program, the medical nursing units gain experienced bed nurses who are prepared to become leaders and are committed to the organization, which inevitably leads to quality patient and family centered care and positive patient outcomes.

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that this program receives ongoing administrative support for the following reasons:

- The variety of clinical experiences make the Medical Nurse Float Pool nurses more valuable members of the healthcare team
- Nurse managers gain a staffing solution in times of need
- Medical units are staffed with clinically strong float nurses
- Competent bedside nurses provide quality patient and family centered care, which leads to excellent patient experiences and positive patient outcomes

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