

Addressing Nursing Turnover: New Grad Residency Programs

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Nurses comprise the largest group of healthcare providers in the healthcare industry (Perry et al., 2018). By 2022, 1.05 million new nurses will be needed in the United States, due to an aging population and increased number of nurses approaching retirement (Fallatah et al., 2017). However, when addressing the nursing shortage, just as vital as hiring and training new nurses is ensuring that nurses will stay. Turnover is defined as leaving a position within a healthcare unit, leaving a healthcare organization, or leaving the healthcare profession entirely (Chegini et al., 2019). Nursing turnover is an estimated 12 to 44% worldwide (Chegini et al., 2019), and 35 to 60% among new graduate nurses in the US (Van Camp & Chappy, 2017).

Effects of Turnover

Turnover of nursing staff impacts healthcare organizations, nurses, and patients. Staff turnover incurs significant costs, an estimated \$88,000 per nurse and up to \$8.5 million annually to a healthcare facility (Halter et al., 2017). Turnover leads to increased workload, physical and emotional stress, mental health deterioration, and decreased job satisfaction among remaining nurses (Fatallah et al., 2017). For patients, nursing turnover leads to decreased patient satisfaction and an increase in medication errors, adverse events, morbidity, and mortality.

Causes of Turnover

Top factors contributing to nursing turnover are lack collaboration among peers, occupational stress, and lack of support from leadership during new graduate role transition. High levels of identification and commitment as part of a team and quality nurse-physician collaboration has been found to increase retention rate among nurses studied among Magnet hospitals (Galletta et al., 2016). Similarly, according to Perry and colleagues, teamwork was one of the top five factors contributing to retention rate in a study of Army healthcare facilities

(2018). Job stress was found to double turnover rate, and 82.8% of nurses interviewed in a study by Chegini and colleagues rated their jobs as highly stressful (2019). “Bedside nursing is a high workload profession. The effect of excessive workload is adverse on patient care and results in dissatisfaction, burnout, and turnover among novice nurses,” (Kox et al, 2020, p. 7). Factors which increase workload for nurses include rotating shifts, overtime, limited break time, and violence from patients and family members.

An estimated 35% to 60% of Registered Nurses leave the healthcare profession in their first year (Van Camp & Chappy, 2017). This is due to a transitional gap between student and professional nurse caused by increased responsibilities, complexity of patient issues, lack of confidence, underdeveloped of nursing skills, poor critical thinking skills, ineffective communication, and lack of mentorship. Due to the transitional gap, nursing administrators have identified that only 10% of new graduates are prepared to work independently as nurses (Van Camp & Chappy, 2017).

Proposed Solution

The nursing profession recommends a new graduate nurse residency program [NRP] to provide support from leadership during transition to practice, to reduce turnover and increase patient safety. This strategy should be addressed first because new grads have the highest rate of turnover among nurses, and the transitional gap of new grad nurses has been recognized as a national public safety issue (Coleman, 2016). According to Walsh, “The Joint Commission recommended the growth of residency programs with a planned period of time in the beginning of one’s career in which new graduates could obtain more knowledge and build up their foundational skills to deliver the safest care,” (2018, p. 275). An NRP is a post-licensure program that lasts from 3 to 18 months, and includes an evidenced-based curriculum, clinical

training and didactic teaching, structured mentorship, debriefing and feedback from peers, and educational resources (Van Camp & Chappy, 2017).

Over the past three decades, various residency programs have been created and implemented by both hospitals and professional organizations. The Versant residency program, founded in 1999, follows the evidence-based Benner's novice-to-expert framework, which teaches that novices can only progress alongside effective mentorship (Van Camp & Chappy, 2017). The Versant curriculum provides classroom sessions, clinical experiences, mentorship, and debriefing through a peer-centered team approach. The University Health System Consortium [UHC], piloted in 2002 by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], is one of the most popular NRP's (Van Camp & Chappy, 2017). The UHC also follows the novice-to expert framework and the AACN's Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Profession Nursing Practice, with classroom experience, monthly simulation sessions, and clinical preceptorship.

Effectiveness

Completion of nurse residency programs has demonstrated to reduce turnover and increase organizational commitment, critical thinking, communication skills (Van Camp & Chappy, 2017), confidence, and job satisfaction (Walsh, 2018). Coleman asserts that a 10-year study of 6,000 nurses in California resulted in improved competency and safety and reduced turnover (2016). Tyndall and colleagues summarize a study from 2011 to 2015 of 9,000 nurses participating in the Versant NRP program (2019). When this data was compared to previous data collected from 2000 to 2010, scores for organizational commitment and leader empowerment increased, and intention of turnover decreased from 5% to 3% (Tyndall et al., 2019). Another study on the Versant program determined an increase in retention from 73% to

92.9% in the first year of nursing practice, and 52% to 80.4% in the first two years of nursing practice (Van Camp & Chappy, 2017).

Effectiveness of the UHC program was studied from 2002 to 2014 (Van Camp & Chappy, 2017). Retention rate began at 88%, and after implementation of the program, increased to 90.3% in 2007, 94.6% in 2010, and 95% in 2014. Another study of the UHC program demonstrated a rise in retention rate from 50% to 87% one year after the program was implemented (Van Camp & Chappy, 2017). According to Van Camp and Chappy, to test the effectiveness of a hospital-developed NRP, one study compared a control group of graduate nurses who completed a hospital's standard orientation with an experimental group who completed the NRP (2017). A year later, retention rate was 53.3% among the control group and 78.3% among the experimental group.

Conclusion

Nurses face increasing challenges due to an ongoing critical nursing shortage. Nursing turnover, a factor contributing to shortages, ranges from 12 to 44% internationally and from 35 to 60% among new graduates. Turnover is triggered by lack of teamwork, job pressure, and inadequate guidance from leadership during the transitional gap between student and professional nurse. Nursing turnover costs healthcare facilities up to \$8.5 million annually, increases burnout for remaining nurses, and decreases quality of care and patient safety. New grad residency programs increase support, clinical competency, confidence, and job satisfaction to address turnover and improve patient safety. Empirical research of NRPs over the past three decades has demonstrated the effectiveness of NRPs and resulting decrease in turnover rate.

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