

SECOND PLACE

2009 Delaware Valley Patient Safety Award

HAHNEMANN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

*"A Positive Return on Investment:
RN Residents Leading the Way"*

A Positive Return on Investment: RN Residents Leading the Way

Abstract

The average RN turnover rate in acute care hospitals is over 20%, while the cost of recruiting new nurses averages \$50,000 per hire and can add as much as 5% to a hospital's annual budget. Faced with these facts, retention — which is a greater issue among those who are new to the nursing profession — takes on an increasingly important role in the acute care setting.

Our hospital identified a solution to improving retention among new nurses by easing 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, and mature professional practice behaviors.

The program provides learning opportunities that enable the student nurse to follow Benner's pathway from novice to an advanced beginner level in just twelve months. Critical issues such as professionalism, shared governance, team building, communication and confidence, crucial conversations and delegation are addressed in an evidence-based practice (EBP) environment.

Although there is standardization across all participating departments, our hospital's RN Residency Program offers an added dimension of customization. Training is tailored to meet the diverse needs of our graduate nurse population. This individualized approach is spearheaded by a Coach assigned to each RN Resident.

Our hospital's vision and execution of this initiative has resulted in an astoundingly low 5.2% turnover rate among those who participated in the program in 2008. An increase in job satisfaction and organizational commitment, along with significant cost savings, are also attributed to the program.

The Goals

As recruiting costs rise and budgets tighten, retention becomes an increasingly critical issue. The cost for advertising, training and loss in productivity associated with recruiting averages \$50,000 per nurse and can add as much as 5% to a hospital's annual budget. Using the Nursing Turnover Cost Calculation Methodology, the cost of turnover is 1.2 to 1.3 times the average nurse's salary.

At an average RN turnover rate in acute care hospitals of over 20% — a number that tends to run higher among new graduates — our hospital has turned its focus to retention through a unique RN Residency Program.

Interventions

Nurses with less than six months of experience are automatically enrolled in our RN Residency upon hire. The following four groups meet once a month for six sessions from 8AM to 12PM with coaching and mentoring continuing for one year.

- 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

Program Content

Our hospital's RN Residency Program is designed to expand the knowledge and skill sets of new nurses. Through a well-planned, wide spectrum of content, each individual is able to create a foundation for building confidence in various domains of nursing practice. This not only has an immediate impact, but also paves the way for moving into the future of nursing.

Many of the session topics can be categorized into two areas: those that promote growth and development and those that impact nursing assessment skills and care. Growth and development subjects include professionalism, shared governance, team building, delegation, communication and confidence, crucial conversations and case studies on organizing your shift while caring for a full assignment. Topics addressing nursing skills include pressure ulcer staging, heart sounds and cardiac assessment, patients diagnosed with refractory complex regional pain syndrome, and holistic nursing support skills and care.

We also recognize the importance of critical thinking for effective clinical decision-making. Each nurse is given the opportunity to expand their critical thinking capacity by exposing them to interpreting arterial blood gases, caring for the patient post general anesthesia, managing a change in patient status, caring for the patient with diabetes, and managing patient care emergencies.

Other topics include flight nursing, understanding sentinel events and root causes, medical and legal aspects of documentation, patient safety goals and much more.

To maximize effectiveness and maintain interest level, the sessions take on various formats including hands-on skills, formal PowerPoint presentations and informal dialogue. While the program outline is structured, the program actually allows for flexibility. For example, patient status and code review are touched upon in one session, but the group requested to explore these in greater detail. Therefore, our critical care educators presented real case scenarios of situations where patient health status had declined and outlined the necessary nursing actions.

Flexibility was also key in providing an orientation group that included many critical care and emergency department nurses with a unique learning experience. Their request to see a flight come in on our helipad was fulfilled when MedEvac took flight and landed for the new nurses. They reviewed the steps taken by a flight nurse and encouraged the new nurses to speak with the pilot, flight nurse and EMT.

Coaching and Mentoring

As an essential complement to the group experience, each RN Resident is paired with a Coach who provides individualized attention throughout their first year in clinical practice. Each Coach is a nurse who volunteers to provide an ear to listen, an objective voice and insights in dealing with any situation. They serve in the dual role of enhancing performance and acting as a resource and support system. To maximize effectiveness and avoid any political conflict, Coaches do not work on the same nursing unit as their RN Resident.

In general, Coaches are charged with helping new nurses expand their personal values, understand organizational change, enhance communication and interpersonal development, and improve understanding of fact-based information. They do this through in-person meetings and ongoing e-mail communication with their RN Resident.

Outstanding coaching can make a real difference for the RN Resident. One nurse, for example, had concerns with time management. She tried to work on different shifts and with various preceptors, but was continuing to experience frustrations with managing her workload. Her Coach arranged to have her shadow on the cardiac critical care unit. It was this experience — created by a caring Coach — that made the new nurse realize her future would be more fulfilled working on a nursing unit where she was able to have more patient interaction and to provide holistic care on a greater level.

Coaching and Mentoring (Continued)

Adding a powerful top-level perspective to the grassroots training is an individually assigned Mentor. Coming from the nursing administration team, the Mentor provides multiple vehicles of support and nurturing to the RN Residents. Mentors are advisors, experts in a clinical specialty, sources of organizational history, facilitators and trained listeners, and career developers.

Senior administration remains visible and accessible to RN Residents throughout the program. In addition to meeting with the RN Residents during their first session, administrators provide an open door policy through various modes of communication, actively round on all nursing departments, and reinforce trust and confidence during graduation.

The valuable relationships established by both Coaches and Mentors empower the RN Residents to make autonomous decisions and have their voices heard, thus supporting an environment of commitment.

Evidence-Based Practice

We believe that the core elements of evidence-based practice (EBP) are more easily understood with real life examples. These cases illustrate how our organization embraces EBP to positively affect patient care and empower nurses with a strong voice.

The nurses demonstrate commitment by structuring their achieved foundation of knowledge, critical thinking and professional development into creating EBP projects in display board or PowerPoint design. These evidence-based practice projects are placed on our hospital intranet system. They are accessible to all nurses and are living examples of our nurses' dramatic internal impact on the quality of care.

For example, an evidence-based project was created by an RN Resident on the standard of care for febrile neutropenia. When patients are sick, they receive dose reductions of chemotherapy treatment, which is not as effective. Evidence states administering IV antibiotics within one hour of fever greater than 100.4 will decrease sepsis and mortality rates. Initiatives that could be carried out from a nursing standpoint were discussed. It should be the standard that these patients have orders for pan culturing, a chest x-ray and receiving IV therapy. After creating and presenting this evidence-based project, the RN Resident developed a critical pathway for nurses to follow that includes subtle signs and symptoms. She presented the critical pathway to the Medicine PI committee and received approval from the head of the Brodsky service for Oncology. The next step involves monitoring the proper utilization of the critical pathway by working with the oncology fellow to collect STAT antibiotic slips from the pharmacy.

Another example involves the central line policy changing to reflect best evidence, which the RN Residents were partly researching. The old practice was to change the central line after seven days. The evidence-based protocol now states the line only gets changed based on assessment of the site and medical necessity assessment.

Reward & Recognition

The RN Residents proudly present their evidence-based projects during a graduation breakfast or luncheon celebrating their success in the program. In addition to the RN Residents, the graduation is attended by the program facilitator, Chief Nursing Officer, Chief Executive Officer, Senior Nursing Directors, Nursing Department Directors, and the Department of Staff Education. Each RN Resident is recognized in a ceremony following the presentations in which they are presented with a certificate (**Appendix A**) and pin.

Results

Delivering the highest quality care to our patients is what we do every day at our hospital. Ensuring 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.

The vision, design and execution of this program have improved our ability to attract, train and retain quality nurses. Our custom-designed program provides recent nursing school graduates with the hands-on assistance needed to gain proficiency in their profession, increase satisfaction with their work, and create a strong commitment to the profession.

The undeniable influence of the RN Residency Program can be seen in a precipitous drop in RN turnover (**Appendix B**). After the first year of the program, turnover dropped from 28% in 2007 to 5.3% in 2008. Furthermore, the year-to-date turnover rate for 2009 is currently at 4.93%. This demonstrates the sustainability of the program.

New nurses are now more intensely engaged in evidence-based practice than ever before. Their commitment to completing and presenting evidence-based projects went from 20% for the group that graduated in July to 100% in January and April. Once merely viewed as novices, these nurses are now equipped to formulate and execute strategies that drive optimal patient care.

Hospitals must continue to invest in newly hired nurses by providing them with the very best orientation into the nursing profession. Our hospital's innovative program can be created and implemented by any organization willing to make a commitment to providing a smooth and successful transition for their new nurses and, at the same time, improving retention. We have proven that the outcome can be as equally successful as the results of any pre-packaged programs — many costing up to \$10,000 per nurse. That cost savings, in itself, can be a real plus for any hospital during these difficult economic times.

Appendix A

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX Hospital

RN Residency Program

Presents this Certificate of Recognition to

For successfully completing the RN Residency Program

January 15th, 2009

XXXXXXXX X. XXXXXX, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer

XXXXXXXXXX X. XXXXXX, MBA, BSN
Chief Nursing Officer



Appendix B

