Developing Nurse Preceptors: Why It Matters?

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Background

Preceptor programs across the Johns Hopkins Health System are highly variable. There is no standardization of:

- Preceptor selection
- Training
- Ongoing education
- Validation of competency skills.

These inconsistencies can adversely affect:

- the preceptor program itself
- the nurses who serve as preceptors
- the training and retention of newly hired nurses

Preceptors are critically important to the success of new nurses and for succession planning within the nursing profession.

Methods

Extensive literature review using the Johns Hopkins EBP Model focused on:

- Best practices for hospital-based nursing preceptor programs
- Development
- Ongoing support
- Essential competencies

Of initial 2273 articles, 115 were appraised and synthesized to generate recommendations

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Reference List available upon request from gcarter2@jhmi.edu

What are the best practices for establishing and maintaining a hospital-based nursing preceptor program?

A robust preceptor program can reduce levels of:

- Preceptor burnout
- Inadequately prepared nurses
- Inconsistent nursing practices
- Staff turnover
- Cost of training/hiring

Recommendations

High-level features of the evidence includes the following recommendations:

- Standard criteria for preceptor selection
- A structured preceptor training program
- On-going preceptor support including continuing education & peer support networks
- Structured tools, checklists, and pathways for preceptors to use as teaching guides, with clear expectations for preceptors and preceptees
- Preceptor scheduling allowing adequate time for teaching, skill development, evaluation, and paperwork while providing patient care
- A standard process for preceptor evaluation and feedback
- Preceptor recognition, rewards and/or compensation

Next Steps

- Present findings to CNO’s
- Prepare to publish to professional journal
- Design materials/resources for the program
- Create a low-risk pilot preceptor program
- Evaluate data from low-risk pilot program
- If successful, standardize across JHHS