

Transition to Practice

“Did that practitioner just tell me to give Mrs. Smith morphine or codeine – I thought she was allergic to codeine....didn’t he read the alert on the chart? I just gave her the morphine so why does he want me to give her something else now? What do you mean they are bringing Mr. Jones back from surgery...he just went downstairs... and nobody has called to give me a report. Aren’t they supposed to call me before he comes back to the floor? I need to ask somebody but everyone’s so busy...”

Does this sound familiar....does it bring back memories of your first days as a nurse when you felt overwhelmed, confused, frustrated, and not sure whom you should turn to for answers to your questions? These are common experiences for newly licensed nurses as they transition from school to practice, especially in the acute care setting. Numerous published studies reporting more than 50% of newly licensed nurses being involved in errors and estimates of 33-60% of new nurses changing positions within their first year of practice verify the reality that transitioning to practice as a new nurse is extremely challenging. At the Foundation for Nursing Excellence we are committed to finding more effective and efficient ways to enhance new nurse competence and confidence development during this critical period in one’s career.

Based on a priority recommendation from the 2004 Institute of Medicine Task Force on the North Carolina Nursing Workforce Report, the Foundation for Nursing Excellence first convened a workgroup to identify the core competencies and best practices for helping newly licensed nurses develop into competent and confident practitioners, thereby reducing both patient errors and unwanted nurse turnover. The long term goal of our Transition to Practice Project is to create an evidence-based statewide transition to practice model program for new nurse graduates by 2015. TTP is now in Phase III (2010-2011) of this multiyear project with participation from nursing leaders in both practice and education, seasoned nurse preceptors as well as newly licensed nurses across the state since 2005. Included in this newsletter is a summary of each of the phases of the project and the key findings for each phase.

Phase I: In 2006 funding from BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina Foundation provided support for the implementation of Phase I of the project. Phase I was designed to determine the significant elements in current transition experiences across North Carolina that support the development of newly licensed nurse’s competence and confidence while decreasing the risk for errors during the early months of transition into the work setting. **The key finding from Phase I was a significant correlation between self reported competency scores and the relationship between preceptors and new nurses.** The quality of the new nurse/preceptor partnership had a direct relationship with how competent a new RN felt about his/her nursing practice. Of equal importance was the finding that a higher competency score reported by a new RN correlated with fewer reported practice errors at both four and six months.

Phase II: During 2009 the FNE completed Phase II of the Transition-to-Practice project, with support from BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina Foundation, The Duke Endowment, and Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust. In Phase II, both a comprehensive literature review of best and promising practices in new nurse transition programs and preceptor preparation as well as a survey of North Carolina clinical agencies to determine current practices related to preceptor preparation were completed. In addition, two invitational conferences were convened: *Best and Promising Practices in Preceptor Preparation and Role Development and Simulation* and *New Nurses: Promising Practices to Facilitate Transition to Practice*. It became clear from both the Phase I survey findings and Phase II activities that the preceptor is a critical component in the successful transition of a new nurse into the practice setting and that there is no consistent preparation for preceptors. Thus, the next phase of this initiative focuses on the preparation of preceptors for their essential role.

Phase III: The focus of Phase III is the testing and evaluation of strategies and tools to prepare preceptors for their critical role in the transition of newly licensed nurses to the practice setting. Interventions began being testing in nine pilot hospital settings across North Carolina in the Spring of 2010, prior to the employment of newly licensed nurses. Related data collection will occur throughout the first six months of new nurse employment. Analysis of the effectiveness of the interventions will occur in the first quarter of 2011.

The key components of Phase III are as follows:

- Utilize and evaluate effectiveness of online learning modules in preparing preceptors for their role.
- Implement and evaluate the use of simulation scenarios where preceptors will function in the role, receive individual feedback on their performance in managing preceptor-preceptee situations, and debrief in a learning environment.
- Evaluate preceptors' ability to provide appropriate, timely feedback to a new nurse preceptee in ways that help the new nurse enhance her/his ability to provide safe, quality patient care and grow as a professional.
- Evaluate overall competence and confidence development as well as retention of newly licensed nurses in the pilot study.

The nine North Carolina Hospitals participating as pilot sites for Phase III are:

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| Alamance Regional Medical Center | High Point Regional Health System |
| Cape Fear Valley Health System (includes Cape Fear Valley Medical Center and Bladen County Hospital) | Onslow Memorial Hospital |
| Granville Medical Center | Pitt County Memorial Hospital |
| | Randolph Hospital |
| | Wayne Memorial Hospital |

By early spring of 2011, the Foundation for Nursing Excellence will release the online modules from the demonstration project and make them available to any setting that wishes to enhance their preceptor program. Reports, summaries and findings to date in this Evidence-based Transition to Practice Project can be found on the FNE website at www.ffne.org or by contacting Kathryn Heilig at 919-787-2016.

Visit the Foundation's website to learn more about our current Just Culture and Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) initiatives. www.ffne.org

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