Pursuing Pathway to Excellence and Approaches to Nursing Education

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“The Pathway to Excellence program is the premier designation for healthy work environments and recognizes healthcare organizations and Long-Term Care organizations for creating positive practice environments where nurses excel” (American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), 2016, Pathway Program Overview). To qualify for this designation, organizations have to meet the criteria of six quality standards including, shared decision-making, leadership, safety, quality, well-being, and professional development (ANCC, 2016, Pathway Standards). The information about how the healthcare facility meets those criteria gets submitted, approved by an on-site appraiser, and then verified by nurses through an online survey. This process is unique and empowering to nurses because they ultimately determine the approval of the Pathway to Excellence designation. Because of the nursing focus, this certification is engrained in the nursing theorists of Dorothea E. Orem and the Self Care Deficit Theory (2001) as well as Jean Watson and the Theory of Caring (1979).

One barrier to this certification is how to inform the nurses of the outlined standards. Because all individuals learn differently, it was important to create a teaching plan that incorporated various learning styles. One organization chose to use the VARK (Visual, Aural, Read/Write, & Kinestetic) (Fleming, 2001) learning styles. This organization also chose to use imagery in their teaching, creating a virtual “road trip” for the Pathway to Excellence journey. The road trip made stops at six different destinations in Maryland, each correlating with one quality standard. For the quality standard, the destination was the National Aeronautics Space Administration (NASA) in Goddard, MD. Each standard was reviewed for a one-month time frame; during that time, nurse champions would complete in-service rounding, leading an on-unit activity relating to both the destination and the standard. In addition, to reach all nurses, interactive dittos were created, 5x7 information cards were passed out to all units, and power point slides were developed to run on a continuous loop in the unit breakrooms. The goal of the virtual roadtrip was to help nurses understand the quality standards, understand what the hospital is doing to meet those standards, and ultimately pass the survey for the Pathway to Excellence designation.

Title:
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**Abstract Summary:**
To qualify for the Pathway to Excellence© designation, organizations have to meet six quality standards which are ultimately verified by nurses. One organization chose to create a virtual “roadtrip” for their teaching journey making stops at six different destinations in Maryland, each correlating with one quality standard.

**Content Outline:**
1. Introduction
   a. Overview of Pathway to Excellence©
   b. Relation of Pathway to Excellence© to various nursing theorists
   c. One-organization’s approach to nursing education on the Pathway to Excellence© quality standards
      i. “Roadtrip” across Maryland
2. Main Points
   a. What is Pathway to Excellence©
      i. Overview of designation
   b. Six quality standards and nursing theorists
      i. Breakdown of 6 quality standards
      ii. Relation of each quality standard to a nursing theorist
   c. Approach to nursing education
      i. VARK learning styles
      ii. Teaching tools utilized to share information with large groups of nurses
      iii. Breakdown of “roadtrip” and interactive activities
   d. Incentives
      i. Overview of incentives provided to nurses learning the standards
3. Goals
   a. Improve understanding of Pathway to Excellence© designation, standards, and pass Pathway to Excellence© survey

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