Healthy Possibilities: Advancing Health Promotion Through a Structured Nursing Research Program

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Introduction: A Nursing Research Institute was created to support the development of research initiatives at a community hospital. A key component of the institute was an 18-month Nursing Research Intern program to support staff nurse participation in original research. In phase one of the program, four nurses were selected to work with mentors to examine evidence in an area of common interest. The area of research chosen was health promotion.

Purpose: The purpose of this presentation is to describe the development of health promotion research through a structured format of nursing mentorship.

Background: There are a number of national initiatives to support adaptation of lifestyle change for improved health and wellbeing. The American Hospital Association supports employer based health promotion initiatives with evidenced based tools (www.heart.org). Health promoting lifestyle practices specific to nursing have been an area of research in recent years (Thacker, Haas, Brancato, Flwy & Greenawald, 2016) The American Nurses Association’s campaign, Healthy Nurse Healthy Nation, supports the notion that if 3.6 million registered nurses increased their health and wellness, the impact on the nation would be significant (www.HealthyNurseHealthyNation.org). In the initial phase of the Nursing Research Intern program it became clear that health promotion was a common interest among the group of nurses from varied clinical areas. Additionally, health promotion particular to nurses, was a specific interest. Research cites that the nursing workforce, which is approximately 90% female, often lack incorporation of health promoting behaviors in their own life and may be misinformed about priorities of health (Thacker, Haas, Brancato, Flwy & Greenawald, 2016). Women’s social roles in the United States may influence their health as many work, care for families and have other demands. The group found a variety of sources of information and a valid and reliable tool called the Health Promoting Lifestyle Profile (HPLP) (Walker, Sechrist & Pender, 1986). Additionally, the organization had recently opened a new state-of-the-art hospital which included a focus on features and spaces that could potentially support workplace health initiatives.

Intervention:

Two nurse leaders developed and led the intern program. As a Magnet™ designated organization, cultivating clinical inquiry and supporting the development of new knowledge related to research is essential (Johantgan et al, 2017). The program followed a structured twelve step road map to support the development of clinical inquiry and investigation (Pierce, 2009). In the initial phase of the program, the group was supported to develop as a team and share common interests or concerns around their professional practice. A key to the early mentorship of the group was to help them focus on a topic and develop appropriate research questions.
Reviewing and critiquing the current literature around the topics also required development within the group.

In fall of 2017, the group conducted a descriptive study (n=100) of the hospital nurses using the HPLP to seek evidence about the current health promotion attitudes and behaviors. Variables such as shift, commuting time, role of primary caretaker of a family member and enrollment in an academic program were sought in addition to traditional demographic data.

The second study, in spring of 2018, was informed by the evidence of the first study and sought to promote health promotion in the nurses (N=67). This study was a prospective study to identify barriers and support strategies when trying to achieve a self-determined health goal over an 8 week period.

For each study the group worked together to prepare the appropriate documents and develop a detailed protocol. Mentors supported the group through the planning, development and the IRB approval process. Each study was completed with the assistance of voluntary online surveys. Statistical analysis of results was supported with additional resources. Nurses Research Interns were supported to summarize and disseminate the findings of their studies. Both podium presentation and poster presentations were shared at system wide events. The Chief Nursing Officer who supported the funding of the program shared the success with the hospital board of directors.

It was important to the Nursing Research Interns to utilize the findings of the studies to improve the work environment of the organization. A summary of finding was shared with the hospital’s Health and Wellness Committee which is a sustainable group with oversight of workplace initiatives. As a result of the studies, a variety of ideas were discussed and are now starting to be implemented. Findings of the studies will be summarized in the presentation. Overall, nurses at the organization were interested in health promotion activities in the workplace but those activities must be tailored to the overall preferences specific to hospital nurses. Nurses in the studies had very poor stress reduction strategies but were also pressed for time. One example of the studies influence was the initiation of short sessions of mindfulness and stress reducing sessions instituted on clinical units. The evidence of the studies allowed the interventions to target the challenges nurses face. Other initiatives will be rolled out in the fall of 2018.

Conclusion

The success of the Nursing Research Internship program was twofold: it allowed for a structured support of staff nurses to conduct research and focus on a common area of interest; health promotion. The presentation will share greater detail about the research development structure as well as details and findings of the two studies.

Title:
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**Abstract Summary:**
Staff nurses were mentored by nursing leaders to gain knowledge and experience in conducting nursing research of nurse’s health promotion behaviors. Two studies were completed to provide data-supported health promotion initiatives in the workplace. The presentation will describe the Nursing Internship program and a summary of the study outcomes.

**Content Outline:**

1. Nursing Research Institute
   1. A Magnet organization developed multiple initiatives to support nursing research in a community hospital
   2. A program of Nursing Research Interns was designed by two nurse leaders to successfully mentor four nurses through process
2. Research Development
   1. Mentors developed a structure over 18 months to work with staff nurses to develop IRB approved studies.
   2. Nurses created proposals for two studies based on personal interests and national initiatives.
   3. A descriptive study of health promotion behaviors and an 8 week prospective study of goal achievement were completed.
3. Health Promotion of Nurses

**References:**


1. Nurse Interns had a common interest in health promotion related to nurses and chose to focus on research questions related to this topic.
2. The existing literature supported clinical inquiry into this topic and informed the two studies.
3. The research questions were:
   1. What is the current data regarding health promotion practices of nurses at this organization?
   2. What are the supports and barriers for nurses seeking to achieve a self-determined health promotion goal?

1. Program Outcomes
   1. Nurses in the organization were able to lead and complete two research studies on a topic of common interest.
   2. The nurses leaders were successful in the development of a Nurse Research Intern structure with modifications based on lessons learned.
   3. Data from the outcomes of the study were valuable to inform health promotion activities and interventions at the organization.
   4. Staff nurses were further mentored around the scholarly dissemination of outcomes through poster and podium presentations.

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Author Summary: Kathy A’Hearn has been a Professional Development Specialist at Stamford Hospital in Stamford, Ct. for the past 6 years. She has over 30 years of experience as a nurse, primarily in Critical Care/ Cardio-thoracic ICU. Kathy received her DNP from Sacred Heart University and focused her research on increasing nurse-self efficacy during cardiac arrest situations using simulation.

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**Author Summary:** Dr. Sally Gerard is an Associate Professor at Fairfield University in Fairfield CT and an Inpatient Diabetes Educator at Stamford Hospital. She has a passion for supporting scholarship and EBP in area hospitals.