Background. Nurse engagement is essential for ongoing organizational success. If organizations can engage nurses, they may be able to improve organization and patient outcomes. The direct supervisor of the floor nurse in the inpatient setting is often in a middle management. There was an identified gap in practice at a community hospital in the Southwest United States. The direct supervisors in middle management positions lacked the knowledge and skill required to motivate and engage staff during professional interactions. There was inconsistent and ineffective communication. These factors lead to disengaged nurses and poor organizational outcomes.

Purpose. The purpose of the project was to utilize current evidence of direct supervisor influence on nurse engagement to create an educational program for clinical leads to use in their interactions with direct reports. The project answered the practice-focused question: Will an education program for clinical leads increase their perception of their ability to improve nurse engagement?

Framework and Concepts. The Relationship-Based Care Model was used as a framework for the project, and concepts included work engagement, nurse engagement, recognition versus meaningful recognition, professional development, communication, transformational leadership, and authentic leadership. The Relationship-Based Care Model fosters building relations between healthcare providers and patients/family/caregivers but also building relationship between one another.

Design. The project was an evidence-based practice project with a voluntary survey style design. The nursing staff who report to the middle management, in this case clinical leads, were given an electronic nurse engagement survey to validate previous findings. The education program was adjusted after analyzing the results from the survey. The education program focused on building relationships, staff input, communication, recognition, feedback, and professional growth. The clinical leads were given a self-assessment on a five-point Likert scale to assess their perception of their leadership skills before and after attending the education program.

Analysis and Findings. Descriptive statistics were analyzed using SPSS. The findings of the nurse engagement survey were consistent with the previous employee opinion and nurse engagement survey results validating the need for the education program to improve leader/staff relationships to impact nurse engagement. The data of the pre and post education self-assessments completed by the clinical leads was analyzed. All the questions had increased means following the education program. The most improvement was in the following areas: coordinating relationships among staff improved by 50% and accepting and using constructive criticism improved by 50%.

Evaluation and Implications. Clinical leads recognized that having the knowledge and tools would give them the ability to impact nurse engagement. Research and evidence-based practice initiatives should continue to study the leader’s influence on nurse engagement in relationship to other environmental factors that influence nurse engagement; as well as, how to better prepare leaders to engage nurses in his/her professional roles.
Keywords:
Building relationships, Leadership Skills and Nurse engagement

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Abstract Summary:
After the identification of a gap in practice, an educational program was implemented to improve the perception middle managers have of their ability to influence nurse engagement. The education program included building relationships, communication, feedback, staff input, recognition, and professional growth.

Content Outline:

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Professional Experience: I have 17 years of nursing experience with a history of clinical experience in medical surgical nursing, psychiatric nursing, ANCC certified, home health nursing, academic education, and hospital education currently. I have over 10 years of experience in organizational leadership. My current role is as a nurse manager. I am working on my DNP and should complete it this fall 2018.