Structured Abstract

LOCAL PROBLEM
Recruitment and retention of nursing staff is an intricate process, one that requires strategic data analysis and planning. In order to stay abreast of these trends, facilities must examine contributing factors to the recruitment, retention, and turnover of nursing staff, both internally and externally to the healthcare environment. Though a federally-funded, veteran-centric healthcare facility in the southern United States has taken steps to recruit and retain new nurses through innovative student nurse pipeline programming, it has experienced low retention of participants following completion of its Student Nurse Technician (SNT) program, with virtually none of the program participants electing to: (a) stay on to be converted to Graduate Nurse Technicians (GNTs) while waiting to achieve licensure or (b) requesting to be converted to full-time RNs by the end of the program. The problem has been attributed to various reasons, including administrative processing barriers such as speed of hire, surrounding community incentives and promotional opportunities including scholarships and sign-on bonuses, as well as student nurse perceptions of the program. As additional evidence, undergraduate students also complete clinical rotations at the facility each year, but none have expressed an interest in working for the facility. Evidence from the literature speaks to understanding new nurses’ intent to stay at their jobs and cites several factors that influence intent to stay and intent to leave, which are connected to the feelings of imbalance between effort and reward that may be idealized in formal nursing education.

PROJECT PURPOSE
The purpose of this project was to develop, implement, and evaluate a Student Nurse Technician (SNT) program evaluation tool that could be utilized to identify opportunities for improvement of SNTs matriculating through a program provided by a federally funded, veteran-centric hospital in the southern United States.

METHODOLOGY
Ajzen and Fishbein’s Theory of Reasoned Action/Theory of Planned Behavior was used as the guiding theoretical framework for this project by providing a solid foundation through which the concepts of recruitment, retention, search, and intent to stay could be used to evaluate a SNT program’s effectiveness in attracting and retaining new recruits to the facility. In developing the tool, components of successful nurse residency programs were researched in order to create a tool that would be reflective of evaluating the program needs and desires of nursing students matriculating through the program. Administrators of the program, as well as nursing leadership were consulted, with final approval and support of the tool confirmed by senior administration. At the time of tool administration, six SNTs were onboard at the facility. The 21-question, 2-part tool was administered via survey link using the SurveyMonkey platform. Part 1 consisted of 15 questions where participants ranked their experiences using a Likert scale format. Part
2 consisted of 6 questions asking participants to select the most appropriate scenario for each question. Each part contained an open-ended question. No identifiable information linking the tool to the individual participant was collected. Institutional Review Board (IRB) Determination of Need reviewed this project as quality improvement.

RESULTS
One-hundred percent (N=6) of participants who were administered the tool completed it. For Part 1, participants had highly favorable responses with statements made in Q1, Q5, Q7, and Q15 with 4/6 agreeing or 2/6 strongly agreeing. Questions focused on feeling at ease with asking for help from RNs on the unit, practicing new procedures/skills, increase of knowledge base since starting the program, and whether participants felt they would be better nurses by being SNTs. For Q2, Q4, and Q9, 5/6 agreed or 1/6 strongly agreed to statements regarding being provided with encouragement, feedback, and support by nursing staff, as well as expectations of the role being realistic. In Q3 and Q6, 5/6 agreed or strongly agreed, while 1/6 disagreed when asked about opportunities to practice therapeutic communication and staff availability during exposure to new situations. For Q8 and Q10, which centered on intent to stay and the desire to accept a job offer at the facility also received mostly positive reviews, with 5/6 agreeing or strongly agreeing, and 1/6 strongly disagreeing. For Q11-Q14 which related to the role of mentors/preceptors, and their assistance with providing encouragement and feedback, as well as how the SNT program contributed to academic improvement respondents showed mixed reviews, ranging from agree to strongly disagree. For Q17-Q20, the majority agreed that they had difficulty with role expectations and SNT program orientation/unit socialization. They also indicated that the most satisfying aspect of the program lie in learning the professional nursing role and in interactions with patients/families, as well as progressive responsibility. Narrative data Q16 and Q21 yielded only 1 result for each. For Q16, the respondent expressed concerns of not having a defined preceptor and clarifying the SNT role with units/management. In addition, they expressed the need to confirm what SNTs believe their role expectation is and to receive feedback from management. Military obligations were cited as reason for not seeking employment. Similar concerns were expressed for Q21.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE
Results from development/implementation of the tool indicated a need for SNTs to have a more clearly defined role definition, desire for additional support from mentor-figures, and program support. Understanding what issues and deterrents SNTs face through matriculation will in turn help to understand not only what factors influence retention of new nurses, but also what quality improvement measures can be taken in the process to improve the SNTs experiences. The use of the tool with a larger SNT participant pool aggregated over a longer period of time is needed.

Keywords: student nurse technician, recruitment, retention, evaluation tool, and intent to stay.

Team Leader: Dr. Gretchen McDaniel
Team Member(s): Dr. Stephanie Wynn