Preparing for a Successful Preceptorship: A Toolkit on Precepting Nurse Practitioner Students

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Structured Abstract

LOCAL PROBLEM

Locally, regionally and nationwide, graduate schools of nursing (SON) and nurse practitioner (NP) students experience great difficulty securing qualified, willing preceptors. Competition for clinical sites and preceptors is intense, especially for distance programs and those within the same geographic region. Advanced practice nursing program growth has created additional challenges for developing clinical opportunities and there is a shortage of doctoral-prepared advanced practice faculty to supervise and guide advanced practice registered nursing students (APRN). These factors contribute to the complex and challenging situation regarding nurse practitioner clinical training. Literature supports providing no-cost continuing education as an incentive to precept APRN students. In fact, NP preceptors consistently report a desire for preceptor training, and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing has called for increased preceptor training through the development and implementation of a repository for preceptor orientation materials.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to increase the supply of NP preceptors by offering no-cost continuing education (CE); through the implementation of an advanced practice preceptorship education toolkit, schools of nursing and national associations will be able to provide an incentive to NPs to serve as a preceptor. By addressing the barriers and issues they encounter when mentoring a student, the NP will be prepared to confidently mentor the student.

METHODOLOGY

The project encompasses two-parts. The first part of the project was to develop and administer the *Nurse Practitioner Preceptor Survey* to identify the local need for preceptor professional development through the implementation of an advanced practice toolkit. Responses from the survey questions determined: (a) the barriers and motivators for precepting NP students and (b) the need for educational preparation to develop the clinical preceptor role. Information obtained from the survey guided the second part of the project, the development of the advanced practice preceptorship toolkit. The study used a cross-sectional study design of a convenience sample of three groups of nurse practitioners: (a) members of the West Alabama Nurse Practitioner Association (WANPA), (b) members of the Central Alabama Nurse Practitioner Association (CANPA), and (c) NP faculty at Samford University's Ida Moffett School of Nursing. The survey was conducted via pen and paper at the group's monthly meeting and asked 22 questions in the following categories: (a) years of experience (b) organizational support, (c) incentives and barriers, and (d) role preparation. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analyzed for meaning using descriptive

statistics. The theoretical framework for the DNP project was Patricia Benner's Model of Skill Acquisition in Nursing, also known as the Novice to Expert Model. Specifically utilized in precepting students, Benner's model provides a framework for the NP as the student progresses through the different stages of skill acquisition.

RESULTS
A total of 69 NPs with an average of 11 years of experience completed the *Nurse Practitioner Preceptor Survey*, of which 77% (N=53) have served as a preceptor to a NP student. Regarding organizational support, 61% (N=42) of respondents were encouraged to serve as a preceptor by their employer yet only 35% (N=24) were recognized for precepting on their job evaluation by their employer. In fact, 87% (N=60) do not have a reduced patient or work assignment when precepting and 54% (N=37) work more hours on days they precept a student. Regarding incentives and barriers to precepting, 77% (N=53) of survey participants stated they precept to "give back" to the nursing profession. Considering that all preceptors receive credit for recertification for precepting, the top incentives preceptors most appreciate from a school of nursing were free continuing education credits (43%, N=29) and monetary reward (37%, N=25). The loss of productivity and time constraints tied at 39% (N=27, N=27) as the greatest barriers to precepting. Regarding role preparation, 84% (N=58) had never participated in a preceptor development course and 75% (N=52) believed that receiving preceptor development in the form of CEs would increase the likelihood of serving as a preceptor. The top three topics that respondents felt should be included in a preceptor development toolkit included: (a) eliciting critical thinking skills, (b) time management strategies, and (c) assessing the student's learning style and needs.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE
Results from the *Nurse Practitioner Preceptor Survey* proved that local NPs desire advance practice preceptor training and are willing to serve in order to "give back" to the nursing profession. Most survey participants stated that receiving preceptor development in the form of continuing education credits would increase their likelihood of serving as a preceptor; therefore, an advanced practice preceptorship toolkit has the potential to positively impact nursing practice and more importantly, patient outcomes. By increasing the pool of available preceptors, SON faculty and NP students will have less difficulty finding willing preceptors for clinical experiences. NPs will benefit from the acquisition of CEs for no cost and from the knowledge gained from the professional development course on preceptorship. NP students will benefit from highly qualified and trained preceptors, and patients will benefit from the care they receive for a NP. Without the clinical training from preceptors, healthcare will see a dramatic decrease in NP providers resulting in less access to quality health care and poorer health outcomes.

Keywords: advanced practice, preceptor, preceptor toolkit, preceptorship, continuing education

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