Understanding Generational Diversity in Acute Care Hospitals to Enhance Nurse Retention
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SO...WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Never before in the history of nursing has there been a workforce of three generational cohorts spanning over seventy years. There is a lack of understanding regarding their diverse behaviors, beliefs and attitudes which were developed in the era of history in which they were raised. Miscommunication, negative perceptions and attitudes arise on the nursing units causing conflict between the generational cohorts. This conflict causes lateral violence, gossip, and job dissatisfaction resulting in high nursing turnover rates.

GENERATIONAL COHORT GENERALIZATIONS

- **Baby Boomers** (Born 1946-1964) 51-69 years
  - Strong Work Ethic
  - Many years of work experience
  - May be eligible for a retirement pension
- **Generation Xer's** (Born 1965-1980) 35-50 years
  - Self-reliant, assertive and innovative
  - Technology became a part of their formative years
  - "Work to Live", balancing work/life schedules
- **Millennials** (Born 1981-2000) 34 and younger
  - Raised by "helicopter" parents
  - Lived their entire life with technology
  - If unhappy, they will move to another job

BEST PRACTICE

Review of thirty scholarly peer reviewed articles acknowledged conflict between these generational cohorts at the workplace through quantitative and qualitative studies. After critical analysis and synthesis, best practice recommended a quality improvement measure to empower nurse leaders to recognize, lead and mentor these generational cohorts on the nursing units.

SOFT SKILL SETS

- **"Awesome Powers" to the Rescue!!**
  - **Communication Skills / Most Important Skill**
    - Baby Boomers prefer face to face communication
    - Generation Xer's prefer email and texting
    - Millennials use texting, IM and expect an immediate response
  - **Attitude Skills**
    - Nurse leaders must recognize interactional incompatibilities between the nursing staff
    - Leaders must be skilled in intervention, feedback and support to staff
    - Continuous mentoring and coaching is necessary.
  - **Teamwork Skills**
    - Put group goals ahead of personal goals
    - Set time limits to share ideas, vision and objectives
    - Assign tasks to staff that have expertise in specified area
    - TEAM = Together Everybody Achieves More
  - **Networking Skills**
    - Nurse leaders need to offer increased opportunity for learning and support
    - Develop resources for growth development and succession planning
  - **Critical Thinking Skills**
    - Baby Boomers can exchange ideas through their experience
    - Generation Xer's and Millennials can rely on technology incorporated through evidence based practices in scholarly peer reviewed literature
  - **Professionalism Skills**
    - Nursing Code of Ethics
    - Abiding by hospital policies and procedures
    - Respect for patients, families, care givers and co-workers

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Understanding generational diversity is an ongoing research practice since society is living longer and working longer in the workplace. As life expectancy of the general population is on the increase, there is a growing number of people who will need quality healthcare now and in the future. Chronic diseases and age specific illnesses will send people to acute care hospitals where it is expected that there will be competent nursing staff to care for these patients on a 24/7 basis. Nurses are the primary care givers in these environments. A shortage of staff nurses could be devastating to the patient population and their communities.

CONCLUSION

"Each generation goes further than the generation preceding it because it stands on the shoulders of that generation. You will have opportunities beyond anything we've ever known”

Ronald Reagan

REFERENCES