Essential Components of Leadership for the Bedside Nurse

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Introduction
“...the nursing profession must produce leaders throughout the system, from the bedside to the boardroom.” (IOM, 2011, p. 7)

There is a call to transform nursing education to meet today’s healthcare needs. (Benner et al, 2010)

A limited amount of nursing research was found that explicitly focused on leadership of the practice of bedside nursing.

Current practice trends include increased use of unlicensed assistive personnel, hospitalized acute care patients have more complex chronic diseases with decreased length of stay, rapid advancements in technology used in care.

Purpose
To capture perceptions of leadership in the everyday practice for bedside nurses from nurses, nurse administrators, and academic nurse educators.

Methodology
• Qualitative Interpretive phenomenology
• 15 participants recruited through purposeful and network sampling
• Primary research question: What are the components in leadership needed for the generalist nurse in acute care practice?
• Audio-recorded individual interviews using semi-structured interview guide based on a literature review

Data Analysis
Coding conducted using predetermined codes from literature review and inductive codes through use of NVivo11.

Triangulation
• Multiple perspectives - 3 types of participants
• Member checking
• Peer review

Results

Leadership Components of the Generalist Nurse in Acute Care Bedside Practice Model

Effective Communicator
"There are nurses that stand out, that are committed to whatever evidence-based practice is best and are leaders because their patient care is better.” (Alice, bedside nurse).

“I view bedside nurses as the foundation of hospital care. They are the hands-on leader of patient care” (Alice, nurse administrator).

“We delegate work to patient techs and each other-covering lunches or when there is a very acute patient. I delegate to hold them accountable for getting better which I think falls to the nurse as being a good leader.” (Gloria, bedside nurse).

Clinical Decision Maker
Participants recognize importance of competent assessment skills to identify changes in a patient’s condition in order to make appropriate safe clinical decisions.

“In acute situations it’s all reliant on your knowledge as a nurse. Do you know what you can do with what’s going on? You always want to be competent for whatever situation you’re in” (Thelma, bedside nurse).

Participants voiced an increase in physician-ordered protocols and reliance on nurse assessments for order changes. “Sometimes, especially for newer nurses, knowing what your practice limits are becomes very hard.” (Alice, nurse administrator).

Approach to Care: Dispositions

• Integrity
• Professionalism
• Balance

This type of nurse is also a “role model for students and others on the unit” (Frances, academic nurse educator).

“[Bedside nurse leaders ] have more initiative. They’re more receptive to change. They’ll buy in and be a part of a change movement instead of resisting.” (Ava, nurse administrator).

According to participants, bedside nurses’ demonstrate leadership when they correctly exhibit behaviors that follow standards of nursing practice, and institutional policies.

Nurses who are leaders do not take short cuts even when everybody does” (Gloria, bedside nurse).

Nurses with the right attitude are the ones I try to grow into administrative leadership roles.” (Ava, nurse administrator)

Type of role model: for students and others on the unit

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Findings

• Nurses do not view themselves as leaders
• Nurses lack support to develop leadership for bedside practice after licensure
• Nursing education lacks consistent educational experiences and theory to develop leadership for entry into practice

Implications

• Transformation of nursing education is needed to better prepare nurses to become leaders at the bedside.
  – Simulation to develop communication skills, clinical decision making, and dispositions (Ashcroft et al., 2013; Dillard et al., 2006; Lasater, 2007)
  – Support after licensure is needed to further develop leadership and change the mindset of nurses to view themselves as a leader in the context of their role.

Further research is needed to determine specific leadership development actions for academia and at healthcare institutions.

References
Dillard, N., Schuster, S., Breit, M., Carbin, K., Lazaro, K., K. Stenberg, L. (2009). A collaborative project to apply and evaluate the clinical judgment model through simulation. Nursing Education Perspectives, 30(4), 99-104.

This poster represents a dissertation completed by Thelma M. Warner to partially fulfill the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree to Leadership for the Advancement of Learning and Service in Higher Education from the College of Education and Leadership at Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee, WI.

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