Title:
Bridging Inter-Generational Gaps to Increase Collaboration and Retention: Implications for Nurse Leaders

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Session Title:
Poster Presentations
Slot (superslotted):
PST: Saturday, 18 March 2017: 7:30 AM-8:00 AM
Slot (superslotted):
PST: Saturday, 18 March 2017: 9:45 AM-10:15 AM
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PST: Saturday, 18 March 2017: 3:45 PM-4:15 PM

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References:
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Abstract Summary:
Lack of relatability between the older and younger generations of nurses often leads to friction and
misunderstanding, and prevents true collaboration. Nursing administration can take steps to bridge
generational gaps to increase collaboration by facilitating inter-generational mentorship programs,
developing age-diverse teams, and implementation of generation-focused work environment models.

Learning Activity:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE
At the conclusion of this presentation, the audience will be able to describe differences between workplace expectations between Boomer, Gen-X, and Millennial nurses.	Boomers are more comfortable with organizational hierarchies, use of titles, navigating organizational communication channels, and managerial oversight of work but often struggle with rapid technological advances. Gen-Xers prefer individual work, dislike managerial oversight and perceived micromanaging, value work-life balance, often changing jobs to accommodate personal lives, and are tech-savvy workers and consumers. Millennials value collaborative work, expect to be included in decision-making, are tech-sophisticated, and, like Gen-Xers, place premium on work-life balance.
At the conclusion of this presentation, the audience will be able to identify three steps that nurse administrators can take to improve true communication between Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millennials in the nursing workplace.	Nurse administrators can work to bridge the generation gap and promote true collaboration by: (1) facilitating inter-generational mentorship programs, allowing each generation to contribute its talents; (2) creating age-diverse teams; and (3) developing and implementing flexible work environment models that meet the expectations of all generations.

Abstract Text:

The composition of the nursing workforce is changing rapidly, with three generations of Boomers, Generation Xers (Gen-X), and Millennials working in health care. The majority of leadership positions are occupied by Boomers and Gen-Xers, with Gen-Xers poised to take over as Boomers retire. Meanwhile, Millennials have moved into the nursing workplace with their own distinctive set of workplace expectations and talents. Unfortunately, lack of relatability and disconnect in workplace expectations among the generations often leads to friction and impedes true collaboration. The current nursing work environment may not align with the values of Millennials, leading to increased turnover and attrition if their expectations are not met. Substantial vacancies will be created when the Boomers retire, making retention of Gen-Xers and Millennials crucial to preserving an adequate nursing workforce. Administrators can take action to bridge inter-generational gaps, promoting collaboration, meeting changing workplace expectations, and retaining younger generations of nurses.

A review of the literature was combined with extant information and internet sources such as blogs, social media, and opinion-editorial pieces. This search included but was not limited to nursing, to gain a comprehensive understanding of generational values and characteristics that may influence work patterns. Results of this exploration revealed an increasing social dialogue about the often diverging perspectives and potential contributions of each generation. Though the distinguishing traits described in this presentation may not apply to every individual, the clear themes in inter-generational characteristics emerged.

Boomers are likely to be comfortable functioning within the current hierarchical structure of health care where the use of titles and navigating organizational channels to communicate is expected. They may accept long hours of physical presence at work, close managerial oversight, team projects, and the concept of paying one's dues for promotion. Despite often struggling to keep pace with rapid technological advances in the workplace, this group possesses invaluable professional expertise that can benefit younger generations of nurses.

Gen-Xers also have two to three decades of valuable experience to share with their contemporaries. Often described as independent, adaptable, and resilient, Gen-Xers overcame their adolescent reputation as "slackers" to excel at self-management and entrepreneurial endeavors. They prefer individual work and are likely to change jobs in order to meet personal goals and needs. Gen-Xers value work-life balance and flexible work schedules, eschewing the traditional work-to-live approach often embraced by Boomers. They are unlikely to be impressed with titles and often skeptical of authority. However, they are also remarkably adaptable to changing work climates and proficient users of technology.

Millennials tend to favor group consensus, desire frequent feedback about their work, and expect to contribute to decision making. Informal work environments appeal to this group; they are less likely to navigate organizational channels of communication or use titles. Millennials value rapid opportunities for advancement and flexibility from organizations, often contributing to outsiders perceiving them as "entitled". Outpacing previous generations, this group possesses an sophisticated relationship with technology providing them with an invaluable skill set.

Administrators can take three main steps to bridge generational gaps. First, facilitating inter-generational mentorships can promote understanding and combine the unique talents of each group and all individuals. Secondly, creating age-diverse teams allows the perspectives of all ages to be considered in decision-making. This strategy may be of particular importance with Millennials who expect their ideas and contributions to be solicited and valued. Finally, workplace models aimed at retention of younger nurses should include flexibility and choices to meet changing workplace expectations.