Nurse Fellowships: Facilitating the Transition to Specialty Practice
Brenda Diaz, MSN, RN, APN-C, AOCN, Anne Corbett, MS, BSN, RN, April Camiling, MSN, RN, AOCNS, BMTCN
Hackensack University Medical Center, Department of Patient Care, Hackensack, NJ

Significance and Background

A robust oncology nursing education program has been established at HackensackUMC for several years. However, the nurse manager identified the need for a structured transition program for nurses with limited or no experience in blood and marrow transplant (BMT). A blood and marrow transplant registered nurse (RN) fellowship was developed to increase RN retention, increase professional certification, and encourage the staff to develop evidence based projects.

The nurse manager met with our institution’s nursing leadership to propose the fellowship program structure. To promote improved outcomes, it was necessary to establish the role of a clinical nurse specialist. In collaboration, the nurse manager, the clinical nurse specialist, and the education specialist developed the objectives and the program content. They incorporated evidence-based practice initiatives into the program.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommends the establishment of a transition to practice program when nurses enter a new clinical practice area (IOM, 2011). To meet this goal, the program will assist the transition of the nurse fellows into their specialty area of practice.

Purpose

The purposes of the BMT RN Fellowship are:

1. To enable participants to provide evidence-based and comprehensive care and skills relative to the management of blood and marrow transplant patients
2. To recruit and retain RNs on the Blood and Marrow Transplant (BMT) Units
3. To encourage development of evidence-based projects related to the care of BMT patients
4. To encourage BMT certification

Interventions

The Blood and Marrow Transplant Nurse Fellowship is an educational program designed to assist nurses in their transition to BMT nursing practice. Upon completion of orientation, the nurse commences a 1 year BMT Fellowship consisting of eight-hour monthly educational sessions. Educational sessions consist of slide presentations, skill validation, case study presentations, and discussion. A mentor is assigned who will advise, assist and guide each fellow RN. Each RN fellow is expected to complete a BMT Competency Map, which was developed in congruence with nationally recognized standards.

Evaluation

- Certified Nurses
- Fellowship RN Retention
- Nurse Initiated Evidence-Based Projects (EBP)
- Central Line Associated Blood Infection (CLABSI)
- Falls
- Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) – Communication with Nurses

Discussion

There are more than 20,000 blood and marrow transplants performed in the U.S. every year (D’Souza & Zhu, 2016). The 2010 IOM report on The Future of Nursing has drawn attention to the projected nursing shortage, thus bringing our focus to BMT nursing and the need to accommodate a growing patient population (IOM, 2011). In addition, the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP) Nursing Workforce Working Group has recommended outreach campaigns to increase awareness of BMT as a career path option for students (Majhail et al, 2012). Since the BMTCN became a certification recognized within oncology, the need for extensive BMT nursing education became more apparent.

BMT-CN Fellowship (8 Pavilion East Blood and Marrow Transplant) is a 39-bed intermediate care unit with unit-based telemetry. The nurse to patient ratio is 1:3 / 1:4. 8PW BMT (8 Pavilion West Blood and Marrow Transplant) is a 13 bed unit with autologous transplant patients and overflow of the allogeneic transplant patients. The nurse to patient ratio is 1:3 / 1:4. In 2016, HackensackUMC has performed 389 blood and marrow transplants.

Outcomes:

1. BMTCN Certification - increased by 96%
2. Fellowship RN Retention - 100% (98.8%)
3. Evidence-Based Practice/Research – Nursing Management of GVHD of the Skin – adopted into hospital policy, Aromatherapy – approved by IRB
4. Falls – reduced by 11%
5. CLABSI Reduction – 8PE: rate unchanged, 8PW: 80% reduction
6. Patient Satisfaction – HCAHPS: Communication with Nurses increased to 100% in 2017
7. Great Places to Work Survey (GPTW) – When asked to use a 1-5 scale to answer the overall statement, “Taking everything into account, I would say this is a great place to work,” survey participants described their experience as 87% positive. Survey participants were presented with “When I look at what we accomplish, I feel a sense of pride.” 95% of participants agreed with this statement.

Innovation

The BMT RN Fellowship program:

1. Promotes interprofessional collaboration by helping to develop a rapport with other disciplines
2. Promotes confidence and develops communication skills
3. Improves RNs understanding and engagement
4. Encourages novel nurse-driven evidence based practices and research projects relevant to BMT nursing practice and patient population

The BMT RN Fellowship facilitated the creation of the BMT Education Day for staff RNs. This provided an opportunity for all nurses to obtain additional education on the complex needs of the BMT population.