The Transition From Military Nurse to Nurse Faculty

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Background: There is a global shortage of qualified nurse faculty which is expected to worsen as faculty age and retire. Analysis of data collected from The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Annual Survey of Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing (2006-2015) indicates that nearly one third of all nurse faculty are projected to retire within the next 10 years (Fang & Kesten, 2017). In academic year 2015-2016, the AACN reported that there are 1,328 vacant full-time nurse faculty positions comprising 7% of total budgeted full-time positions nationally (AACN, 2016). The sequela of this shortage resulted in 68,938 qualified applicants being denied admission into nursing programs for reasons including the faculty shortage (AACN, 2015). Despite ongoing efforts to recruit and retain faculty to fill these vacancies, experts caution that nursing schools must prepare for faculty departure (Fang & Kesten, 2017).

Recruitment of retiring or separating military nurses is a viable solution to this problem. Collectively, military nurses are a uniquely qualified and diverse pool of professional nurses from which to recruit for faculty positions. Lake, Allen, and Armstrong (2016) have argued that these nurses have a sustained work ethic and skill set which makes them strong candidates for nurse faculty positions.

Literature Review: The transition from clinical practice to academia is often described as challenging. The motivation to teach often stems from a desire to share knowledge and experience to positively influence future nurses. The work-role transition from clinical practice to academia requires nurses to learn new norms and values and in doing so form a new educator identity (Duffy, 2013). Yet, feelings of stress and fear are often reported in the period between shedding the clinician identity and constructing the new educator identity (Weidman, 2013). A meta-synthesis by Murray, Stanley, and Wright (2014) revealed that this shift in identity is a universal theme across qualitative studies investigating clinical to academic transitions.

Although previously considered clinical experts, a lack experience and academic preparation in teaching results in a lack of appreciation of role responsibilities and feelings of unpreparedness for new nurse educators (McDermid, Peters, Daly, & Jackson, 2013). The complexity of the nurse educator role which includes expectations of teaching, advising, scholarship, and committee membership is surprising to new faculty (McDermid et al., 2013). Schoening’s (2013) Nurse Educator Transition Model recognizes a state of disorientation created when new educators return to a novice position. Across studies, nurse educators acknowledge other sources of stress during transition. These include working to fit into the academic culture (Grassley & Lambe, 2015), not knowing what to expect (Weidman, 2013), a lack of guidance regarding teaching and evaluation practices (Weidman, 2013), role ambiguity (Cranford, 2013), decreased confidence in teaching abilities (Murray et al., 2014), workload (Cranford, 2013), and time management (McDermid et al., 2013).

Transitioning from military to civilian life can be complex as Veterans leave a culture, career, and social supports behind (Anderson & Goodman, 2014). While there are numerous studies investigating the role transition from clinical practice to academia, there are no published studies, which could be located, that investigated this same phenomenon from the military nurse perspective. The role transition for these nurses is not known nor what factors impact a successful or failed transition. Therefore, understanding
the military nurse officers’ transition experience from clinical practice in a military setting to nurse educator in a civilian environment may be valuable to schools of nursing and the students they will teach. Further, the results could inform efforts to recruit future military nurse officers into the educator role as a means of reducing the nurse faculty shortage.

Aim: The aim of this qualitative descriptive study was to describe the transition from military nurse to nurse faculty.

Methods: Purposeful and snowball sampling were employed to recruit nurse veterans who transitioned from military service into academia and who were employed in the faculty role in an accredited nursing program in the United States for at least one year. Thirteen individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted between August and October 2016. Content and thematic analysis yielded three themes and nine subthemes. Ten of the 13 total participants validated the findings.

Results: The participants in this study described the transition to the nurse faculty role as a challenging one. A general lack of understanding and a full appreciation of the nurse faculty role responsibilities contributed to feelings of frustration and stress. The transition required an acknowledgement of the reality of the academic culture that differed significantly from the military culture. The participants had to overcome misperceptions of veterans and military service, learn to translate skills learned in the military into a language understood by civilian employers, acknowledge a change from a collectivist to individualist mentality, and appreciate differences in patterns of communication. As these differences became apparent the participants took active measures to bridge perceived gaps in knowledge and skills. The steep learning curve and learning to balance the demands of the role required participants to tap into leadership skills garnered during military service. The participants perceived these leadership skills to be instrumental to a successful transition. As the new faculty began to evolve in the faculty role and witness the fruit of their labor, a new academic identity formed.

Conclusions: Significant cultural and leadership differences between the military and academia created unforeseen challenges for the nurse veterans. Leadership skills, developed during military service, helped participants adjust to the nature of academia and were perceived as vital to a successful transition. Recognizing this transition and the strengths these nurses offer provides evidence for establishing collaborative relationships between schools of nursing and military organizations in addition to focused orientation programs to increase recruitment and retention of these nurse faculty.

Title: 
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Keywords: 
Military nurse, Nurse faculty and Transition

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**Abstract Summary:**
A global shortage of nursing faculty is expected to worsen as aging faculty retire. Faculty vacancies contribute to denied admission of qualified applicants into nursing programs. Recruitment of military nurses is a solution to this problem. The transition from the military to academia is explored with recommendations for improvement identified.

**Content Outline:**

**Learning Objectives:**

1. The learner will be able to describe the transition process for military nurse officers leaving military nursing practice and entering academia in a nurse faculty role.
2. The learner will be able to identify resources within their organization to facilitate the transition from military nursing practice into academia.

**Expanded Content Outline:**

- Introduction to the global shortage of nursing faculty
- Background of Veteran transitions to civilian life
- Review of literature
- Methods
Purpose

Design

Participants

Data collection

Data analysis

Findings

Acknowledging a new reality

Meeting the challenge

Establishing an academic identity

Discussion and Implications for nursing programs worldwide

Limitations and Conclusions

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Author Summary: Dr. Katie Chargualaf is a military spouse and certified medical-surgical nurse with more than 15 years of clinical experience. As a nurse educator and researcher, she teaches undergraduate research and medical-surgical nursing in a traditional baccalaureate nursing program. She is currently working on a study involving Veterans and their transition from the military to the classroom. As a member of an academic-practice partnership, Dr. Chargualaf is investigating early readmissions following kidney transplantation and nurse retention.

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