Transitioning New Graduates into Clinical Nursing: The Path to Safe Patient Care

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Outline

• Issues related to employment integration
• Defining orientation and mentorship
• Example of a government-funded orientation/mentorship program
• Study findings
• Conclusions
Employment Integration: Issues to Consider

Reality shock
- Workplace challenges related to skills, workload, roles, policies and procedures

Feelings of insecurity and fear
- A new environment (need for orientation)
- Providing safe patient care (need for mentoring)

Source: Boychuk Duchscher, 2008; Johnstone & Kanitsaki, 2008; Kramer, 1974
Orientation and Mentorship

Orientation includes classes relevant to the organization and a clinical practice component that is supported by preceptorship and/or mentorship.

Mentorship “a formal supportive relationship between two, or more, health professionals that has the potential to result in professional growth and development for both mentors and mentees.¹” NGG involved daily direct supervision and support towards role development.

¹. NGG Participation Guidelines, 2011 p. 18.
Provincial Mentoring Program

Nursing Graduate Guarantee (NGG):

• Provides full-time employment opportunities to new graduate nurses
• Helps ease the transition to work
• Recruit & retain new graduates
• Stabilize the nursing workforce

Source: Nursing Graduate Guarantee Guidelines, 2011
How It Works

- Minimum of 12 weeks and up to 6 months
- Minimum of 3-6 days of general orientation
- Clear definition of roles of new graduate (NG), mentor, and orientation leader
- Learning plan developed by NG and mentor with input from orientation leader
- Use a variety of teaching strategies and delivery methods

Source: Nursing Graduate Guarantee Guidelines, 2011
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of a government-supported extended orientation and mentorship program on the transition of new graduate nurses into professional practice.
Methods

Mixed methods approach

• Quantitative methods: online surveys of new graduates and employers who participated in the NGG.

• Qualitative methods included semi-structured individual interviews with new graduates and staff nurse mentors and focus groups with employers.
Mentorship Experiences

• Employer survey respondents
  – An average of 93% of employers rated the mentoring they provided as excellent, very good, or good.

• NG survey respondents
  – An average of 90% agreed or completely agreed that the NGG facilitated their transition to nursing
  – An average of 82% rated the mentorship as excellent, very good, or good
Five Common Themes

1. Stress Associated with Transition to Clinical Practice
2. Value of Mentored (Protected) Time
3. Toward Better Clinical Decisions and Safer Patient Care
4. Greater Productivity
5. Integration into the workplace
Stress Associated with Transition to Clinical Practice

**Employers:** Perception that not all new graduates were prepared for the realities of their professional role

“they’re not getting as much clinical as they need...coming out of school without certain skill sets”

**New Graduate Nurses:** Lacked confidence and were concerned about ability to navigate work environment

“there is nothing coming out of school that can...prepare you for the actual workplace…”

**Staff Nurse Mentor:** New graduates can easily become overwhelmed

“They’re green and...not familiar with the environment”
The Value of Mentored Time

**Employers:** new graduates need time to acquire the confidence, competence, and experience needed

“the big difference ...two years ago we had 10 days for integration...now we six months”

**New Graduate Nurses:** having the support of a mentor increased comfort level; liked “having someone there” to answer questions and they “did not feel judged”

**Staff Nurse Mentors:** extended orientation allowed mentors to increase the NGs responsibility gradually

“there’s an awful lot for them to absorb, and I think being on the unit for a fair amount of time is beneficial...not just a few shifts”
Toward Better Clinical Decisions and Safer Patient Care

Employers: allows for better preparation than the usual organizational orientation

“...there’s a huge difference in their ability to think critically, to respond to patient needs in a timely manner, and to understand the safety issues of patients...”

New Graduate Nurses: mentorship helped them become more confident in decision-making and feel safer to practice

Staff Nurse Mentors: mentorship helped new graduates develop assessment and decision-making skills
Greater Productivity

**Employers:** Greater productivity due to effective time management learned during mentorship

“they were not afraid when they hit the ground on their own...their confidence had already been gathered and they were able to be very productive”

**New Graduate Nurses:** over the 6 months NGs went from being overwhelmed to knowing how to prioritize their workload

**Staff Nurse Mentors:** mentors viewed their role as instrumental in teaching new graduates how to organize their tasks
Integration into the Workplace

Employers: the mentorship provided a "robust opportunity to integrate into the culture of the unit"

New Graduate Nurses: mentorship made them feel like part of the team

Staff Nurse Mentors: mentors described how successfully new graduates functioned upon completing their mentorship

"[she was] unbelievable ...never afraid to ask questions...feels right at home with all of the nurses"
Features of the Mentoring Process

• NGs enter workforce feeling unprepared and anxious about their role
• **Protected time** with mentor for an extended period was a critical feature of this model
• **NGG position** allowed gradual development of confidence and skills
• **Mentor** represented a safety net for testing assessment and clinical judgement skills
Conclusion

• There is a need to integrate new graduate nurses into the workforce efficiently and effectively

• The increased complexity of practice settings result in new challenges for new graduates including:
  – patient acuity, advanced technology, pressure to work in multidisciplinary teams, sophisticated communication requirements, and emphasis on patient safety.
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