New Graduate Nurses’ Transition to Practice through a Specialty Residency Program
Beneficial for the Nurse and Beneficial for the Organization

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Setting
Not for profit health system with six hospitals located in a southeastern metropolitan region. Emergency Departments include:
- 59 bed Level II Trauma, Stroke and Heart Center with a 11 bed Children’s Emergency Department
- 44 bed urban hospital-based ED with a secured 10 bed Behavioral Health Emergency Department
- 23 bed rural hospital-based emergency department
- 58 bed county hospital-based emergency department

Background
Emergency departments are facing escalating volumes and increasing need for emergency nurses. Literature has shown that new graduate nurses can enter specialty areas most successfully with the education and support of a highly structured orientation program.

Building upon the successful components of the system-wide and emergency nursing orientation program, this staff development project first piloted a multi-hospital emergency nursing residency program in 2011. Since 2012 all new graduate nurses have entered the Emergency Nursing Academy as a cohort, rotate through different emergency departments, and then match to a department.

Program Design
This 12 month program is divided into three stages:

Stage I
- General orientation, rotations in four emergency departments, emphasis on skills practice, documentation, communication with patients, families, and providers, emergency department flow, basic patient care and satisfaction.

Academy sessions include lectures, case scenarios, hands-on skills labs, reflective practice discussion, and practicum experiences for competency validation. High-fidelity simulation labs help foster emergency nursing clinical judgment and decision-making through carefully constructed scenarios.

Stage II
- New Graduates Identify Benefits
- Stage I Weeks 1-13
- Elimination of nurse travelers in the emergency departments
- Increase in the number, diversity, and quality of the applicants for emergency departments
- Increase in retention of new graduates

Stage III
- The second half of the year the Academy nurses meet monthly for mentoring and professional development.
- New Graduates Identify Benefits
- Stage II Weeks 14-20
- Demonstration of basic knowledge of emergency nursing through pre-and post-testing and competency validation

Outcomes

- Academy nurses are actively involved in unit activities such as Shared Governance Council, unit and system-wide committees
- Academy nurses now serve as coaches and preceptors for incoming new graduates
- Academy nurses have initiated social activities, community outreach activities, and a ‘research dream team’ composed of members from different EDs in the system

Discussion

From the start of the pilot, it was recognized that this program would take from 3-5 years to develop fully. Feedback is gathered from Academy nurses on sites, Academy sessions, preceptors, classes and other experiences. This feedback is used for program improvement. Feedback from preceptors and unit staff on each Academy nurse is shared with the new graduate as positive reinforcement, for goal-setting, and as an opportunity for reflective practice and identification of needs improvement.

Keys to success
- Nursing leadership and organizational support
- Extensive recruitment and selection process
- On-site behavior-based interviews with an interview panel
- Educational resources: Simulation lab, CNEs, CNSs, unit nurses, and educators from Staff Professional Development
- Preceptor development and support
- Growth of applicants through ED Nurse externships and nursing student capstones

Challenges and opportunities for improvement include retention beginning around 24 months, recognition and planning for turnover due to professional goals, and advanced mentoring.

Implications for Nursing

Given the aging nurse workforce and increasing staffing needs in emergency departments, new graduate nurses will be needed to be part of the staff mix. The Emergency Nursing Academy supports existing evidence showing that structured orientation programs with intense education and support are attractive to novice nurses and have a positive impact on how new nurses transition into practice.

References
For references, email Nancy.Summerell@conehealth.com

Acknowledgements
Denise Rhew RN, MSN, CEN and Ann Councilman RN, MSN Nursing leadership and staff at all of the EDs in the system.