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Nurse Residency Programs: Are they Beneficial?

Nadiyah Rivera

INTRODUCTION

After graduating, many feelings loom over the nursing student. Feelings of excitement, angst, and joy may come to mind, but most importantly new graduated nurses may experience feelings of unpreparedness, and a lack of experience. These feelings are important in nurse retention and role satisfaction. Nurse residency programs are meant to help recent graduates transition into clinical practice. Residency programs typically last from 6 to 12 months and serve as an opportunity for graduates to hone critical-thinking and evidence-based decision making skills ("Inside the Nurse Residency Experience," 2018). Nurse residency programs also work to prevent nurse burnout, and develop clinical leadership. Further, nurse residency programs were built to create structure for new nurses, and as an attempt to reduce turnover (Yazdi, 2018).

SIGNIFICANCE

- Most new graduate nurses lack the level of competence required to assume responsibility for patient safety (Rayna et al., 2015)
- The average cost of replacing a graduate nurse student is roughly \$45,000, whereas the cost to provide a nursing residency program is \$2,023 per graduate nurse (Hansen, 2013)
- Nurse residency programs prevent additional costs from being spent on replacing novice nurses because they increase graduate nurse retention by increasing competency and preparedness



("My Residency Program: Transition to Practice," n.d.)

POSITION STATEMENT

Nurse residency programs prepare new graduate nursing students by enhancing their critical thinking skills and role satisfaction before transitioning to professional nursing practice.

SUPPORT FOR POSITION

- "Nurse residency programs are designed to increase competence and skill, and ease the transition from student to new graduate nurse" (Lin et al., 2017, para. 1)
- "Nurse residency programs help new graduate nurses transition from advanced beginners to competent professionals and focus on areas critical to new graduate success including communication, safety, clinical decision making and critical thinking, organizing and prioritizing, evidence-based practice, role socialization, and delegating and supervising (Spector, 2009). (Lin et al., 2017, para 3)
- Nurse residency programs also address the levels of stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction associated with decreased staff productivity (Lin et al., 2017)
- "Residency evaluations show increases in leadership and communication skills and decreases in stress and turnover" (Kosman, 2011, para. 3)
- "The ultimate outcome sought is for patients and their caregivers to be provided with the highest possible level of clinical service" (Kosman, 2011, para. 4).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In a study conducted by Rayna Letourneau and Kerry Fater, it was suggested by employers that "graduate nurses are not prepared to care for high-acuity patients in the practice setting" (2015). Results from the study also indicate that "employers perceived new graduate nurses to be inadequately prepared for practice" (Letourneau & Fater 2015). Establishment of nurse residency programs for graduate nurses is pivotal to new nurse graduates' transition and retention (Warren et al., 2018). Nurse residency programs are an evidence-based approach to support newly-graduated nurses upon entry to the nursing workforce (Cline et al., 2018).

According to a study conducted by Cline:
"Residency programs traditionally consist of 2 focal areas, clinical orientation, which addresses the training of the new nurse in the clinical practice setting, and entry to practice content, which addresses professional development, concepts, and skills. The fundamental components of a residency program include socialization, reflection, delegation, quality, evidence-based practice, and conflict management." (Cline et al., 2018).

Establishment of nurse residency programs leads to more competent nurses and better patient care. These programs increase critical thinking skills, competence, and preparedness, which leads to higher retention rates.

CONCLUSION

Nurse residency programs are the bridge between feeling incompetent to feeling professional. These programs strive to prepare new nurses for the clinical unit by allowing new nurses to work at a slower pace and have a smaller patient to nurse ratio in order to promote critical thinking skills, leadership, and proficient evidence based practice. In order to improve quality and safety of care, as well as retention rates for new nurses, the transition from nursing student to registered nurse must occur. Providing a nurse residency program also decreases the costs for hospitals. Costs are decreased as a result of new nurses feeling competent enough to continue to work after their residency and not breach contract by quitting within the first year of working.

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