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Are Nurse Residency Programs Better Preparing Graduate Nurses For Their Professional Roles?

Maddison Sanders

INTRODUCTION

A nurse residency program (NRP) is a program for new graduates to seamlessly transition from a student to professional nurse role (O'Connor, 2018). These programs focus on orienting graduates into their new specialty and health system. NRPs commonly last six to twelve months.

During this time new nurses gain critical-thinking experience as well as evidence-based decision making. They can attend classes that specifically pertain to their specialty. Nurse residents are allowed to provide care under a preceptor to gain knowledge of protocols and policies of their new place of employment (O'Connor, 2018).

There is currently a nursing shortage with the need for nurses and the nurse retirement rates rising. It is essential for graduates to enter NRPs to be properly trained and ready to fulfill this need (Perron et al., 2020).

SIGNIFICANCE

- New graduate nurses comprise roughly 10% of the nursing workforce (Perron et al., 2020)
- New graduate nurse turnover rates are estimated to be between 35-61%, due to stress and feeling unsupported in their roles (Perron et al., 2020)
- The stressful and challenging transition between student and professional roles has been known to contribute to turnover rates among new nurses within their first year of hire (Eckerson, 2018)
- Studies reported in health systems who did not utilize NRPs, that nurse leaders surveyed felt that 90% of new nurses were ill equipped to safely and effectively practice as registered nurses (Eckerson, 2018)

POSITION STATEMENT

NRPs better prepare graduate nurses for their new professional roles than traditional orientation.



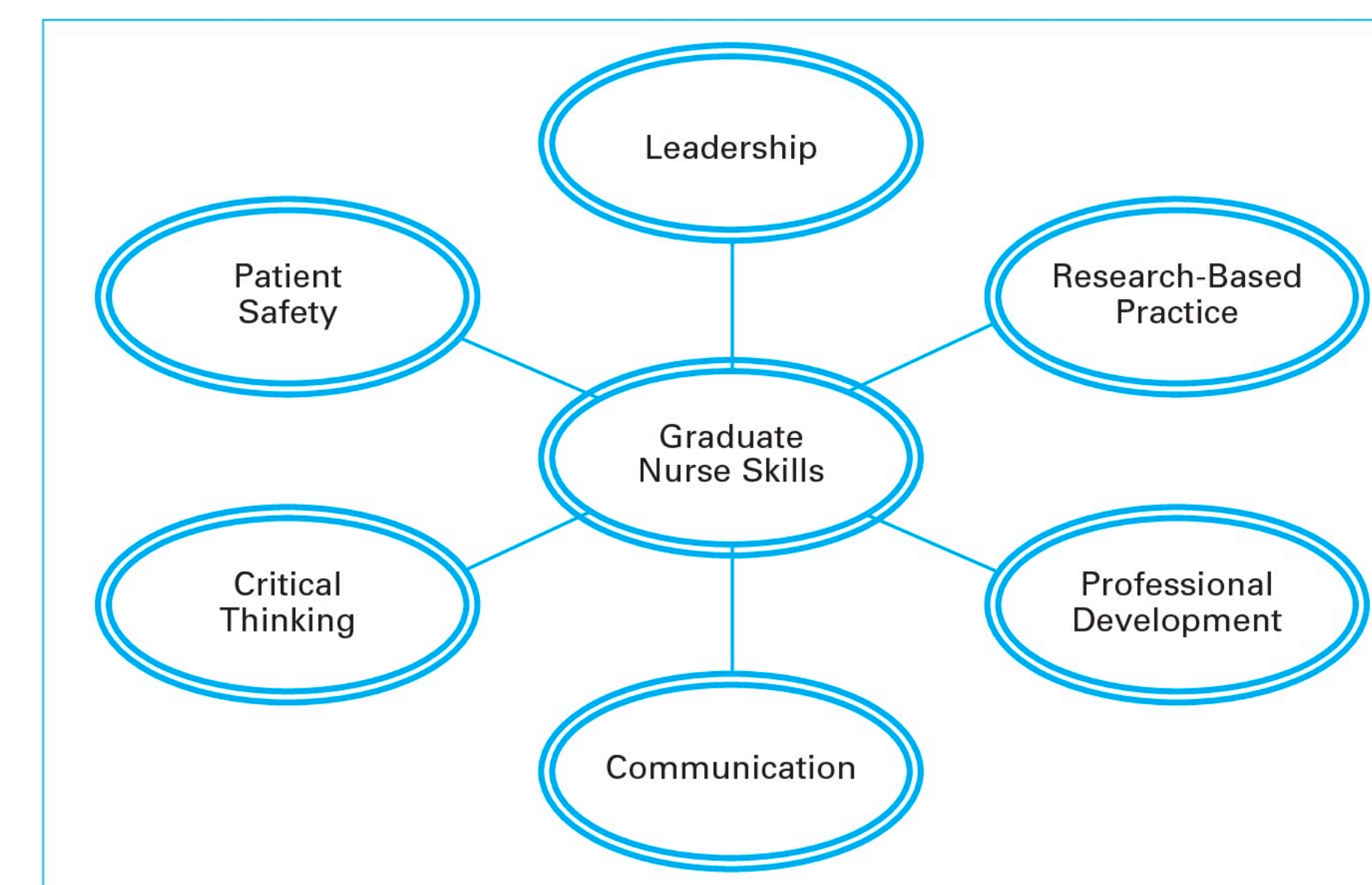
Nurse Residents (St. Luke's Health System, 2021)

SUPPORT FOR POSITION

- NRPs provide many positive outcomes for new graduate nurses. Graduate nurses benefit from education, support, guidance, and professional experience provided by NRPs. (Van Camp & Chappy, 2017)
- NRPs pair new nurses with experienced nurse preceptors allowing the nurse resident to apply classroom knowledge and skills to the clinical setting under the guidance of the experienced nurse (Perron et al., 2020)
- When interviewed at the completion of their NRP, new nurses reported a significant increase in confidence of leadership abilities, organizational and prioritization skills, communication skills, and the ability to provide safe and effective patient care (Van Camp & Chappy, 2017)
- Documentation shows that after the implementation of NRPs the new graduate nurse retention rate is 94-97%, this is financially significant for hospitals paying to onboard new nurses (Perron et al., 2020)

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Health systems should start implementing standard NRPs in place of quick unit orientations (Eckerson, 2018)
- There is a positive correlation between NRPs and improved satisfaction and new hire nurse retention rates (Eckerson, 2018)
- NRP use in hospitals is viewed as pricey when in fact the outcomes of nurse retention and satisfaction is a return on investment, as the hospital will not have to continually hire nurses to replace the nurse graduates that leave (Trepanier, Yoder-Wise, & Finis, 2020)
- NRPs' positive outcomes can encourage new graduate nurses to remain in their current position continuing to develop professionally, decreasing turnover rates and nurse staff shortage within hospitals (Eckerson, 2018)
- The role change from student to autonomous professional is challenging and stressful. NRPs provide an environment for experienced nurses to guide and mentor new nurses leading to a more stable workforce that is comfortable with policies and delivering safer patient care (Perron et al., 2020)



Curriculum Concepts (Pine & Tart, 2007)

CONCLUSION

NRPs better prepare new nurse graduates for professional duties than traditional quick unit orientations. NRPs provide education, mentorship, support, and professional evidence-based practice principles to increase new nurse job satisfaction, workplace confidence, and new nurse retention rates.

NRPs are essential transition programs for new nurse graduates to gain crucial critical thinking, professional experience, and confidence in their new roles. NRPs are increasingly being utilized as evidence suggests they are very beneficial for both new nurses and their employers. NRPs should be implemented in every health system to ensure a properly trained nursing workforce.

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