Transitional Nursing Students from a Preceptor Based Model to a Patient Focused Clinical Experience  

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BACKGROUND
- Increase in number of nurses needed due to Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) OR expansions.
- The increase need for registered nurses has been predicted to exceed the number of nurses available by the year 2020 (Horton, et al).
- The number of students who apply for nursing positions in the facility has not been tracked by the Medical Center’s Nursing Education & Development Department or by Perioperative Education and Research. 
- The quality of the Perioperative Services’ nursing student programs have not been examined for its effectiveness in creating a safe, positive environment for the student. 
- Current literature reveals a paucity of research in the enhancement of a nursing student program from the unit perspective. However, similar work has brought about positive change for students and new graduates' development of knowledge and skills, and for the reduction of turnover of staff (Hicks, 2009; Phillips & Hall, 2014).

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM
- Preceptors have not received training for working specifically with students.
- The number of experienced preceptors available was limited due to the number of nurses currently on orientation.
- It is unknown if the current orientation adequately prepared the student.
- It is unknown if the student has gained in knowledge or skill during their perioperative clinical experiences.

PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Goals were identified:
- Ongoing program evaluations.
- Enhancement of program to encourage student application to VUMC and preferably Perioperative Services. The lack of available, enthusiastic, experienced preceptors needed to be addressed.

Solutions presented:
- Student will follow a patient through their perioperative experience.
- Shift with a Certified Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) and in Electroconvulsive Therapy Unit
- Time in a cadaver lab if available
- Pre and Post evaluations
- Daily objectives for the students applicable to Perioperative Services.

Implementation:
- Leadership meeting with managers and clinical staff leaders.
- Meeting with nurses in 4 South Holding Room & PACU.
- Review of orientation plan
- School instructors received in-depth information about the new process
- Comparison groups created for first rotation of students.

RESULTS
- Comparison of student pre and post evaluation scores reflected an overall improvement in their knowledge base in regards to the preoperative care of a patient, the OR nurse’s role; post-operative pain and nausea & vomiting; thermoregulation, and monitoring of the post anesthesia patient.
- Students expressed very positive remarks towards the new opportunities available in this process.
- At least five of these students who experienced the new process applied and were accepted into positions in the OR internship.
- The program continues to develop as new insight is gained by the follow-up data gathered from the students.

IMPLICATIONS
- Identifying that a student’s experience could be enhanced by following a patient through the three phases of perioperative care, instead of a preceptor based assignment in one area, allowed us to improve the student’s perioperative experience, eliminate assignment of preceptors to students, and increased the number of known applicants to the OR internship.
- Objectives for student programs need to be defined specifically for the individual unit/areas in order that leadership can develop their programs and utilize them as sources for gaining new nurses.
- Preceptor evaluations of students need to be addressed further for future interviewing for the nurse residency/internship programs.
- Nurses working with this new process need to be further evaluated to the effect on its promotion of preceptor experience for all nurses and the reduction of preceptor burnout.

REFERENCES