Introduction

- The Vanderbilt Perioperative Nursing Internship is offered twice a year with an average of 20 nurses per cohort.
- Participants are selected from a national group of applicants.
- The program consists of classroom, clinical observation, independent online study, lab demonstration and return demonstration.
- A standardized set of competencies are utilized to measure and ensure mastery of fundamental skills.
- Clinical validation with dedicated preceptors in the clinical setting occurs over an extensive period of time.
- Weekly feedback sessions are held with the preceptor, manager, educator and nurse intern to assess progress, review goals, identify strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- The initial 12 week program addresses the foundational skills of perioperative nursing ensuring competence with 26 specific fundamental skills in the clinical area.
- Evolution of the program has occurred with each class to include:
  - Continued development of an optimal, standardized interview & selection process.
  - Education & training of preceptors via seminars and ongoing content.
  - Adding relevant content and modifying delivery methods.

Method

Specific modifications to our program have included the following:

- Implementation of information sessions for candidates prior to their interview to learn more about the curriculum, clinical areas, requirements of the role, and structure of the program.
- Implementation of a consistent, interview team utilizing standardized targeted interview questions derived from AORN recommendations.
- Placement of nurse interns into a primary service line or specialty for targeted learning with dedicated preceptors and team members.
- Development of structured preceptor training.
- Implementation of AORN Periop 101 program as a supplement to our classroom instruction and hands-on lab content.
- Implementation of a standardized electronic survey, (Casey Fink and McCloskey Mueller) to assess assimilation into the nursing profession and the perioperative setting.
- Implementation of ongoing group debrief sessions to obtain feedback from the nurse interns related to their experiences and opportunities for program improvement.
- Implementation of additional clinical rotations for nursing students.

Results

With the continued evolution of our program and the multiple changes mentioned we have seen several trends:

- Turnover of nurse interns in the first 90 days has decreased from 30% to 0%.
- Turnover of nurse interns at the 6 month mark has decreased from 38% to 5%.
- Long term turnover has decreased steadily for perioperative nursing staff.
- Overall retention amongst nurse interns has improved steadily with most recent rates at 95%.
- Total orientation time has been reduced from an average of 7 months to an average of 5 months.
- Continued increase of new graduate nurse participation (most recently at 58%).
- Continued increase of nurse interns with at least a bachelor’s degree (most recently at 68%).
- Retention of those nurse interns that attended a pre-hire information session, most recently at 95%.

Conclusion

- Evolution of the content, program, and process is a continued focus with each class.
- Supply of experienced perioperative nurses is an ongoing concern. Hospitals must embrace development of nurses in this critical specialty.
- This program has shown specific and positive results, especially with the new graduate nurse.
- Programs such as this can be a key recruitment tool to attract candidates nationally for perioperative services.
- Increasing local partnerships with nursing programs have provided additional opportunities resulting in a shift to new graduate nurses as major applicants and participants.
- Special attention to well informed applicants and targeted interview questions has led to a standardized selection process with an increase in initial retention.
- Focusing on an initial primary specialty service line has promoted team integration and reduced orientation hours.
- Ongoing communication, surveying, and debrief sessions have provided valuable information for process and program improvement.
- Continued addition of appropriate content (i.e. Periop 101 & online video library) has stimulated multiple learning styles and formats for delivery of information.
- This program strives for continual evolution and improvement with a primary goal of providing well trained, competent nursing staff for our 61 adult and 19 pediatric operating rooms.

Acknowledgments

Scott Strech, RN, BSN, MBA
Director, Peri-Operative Services Education and Research

Ann Benco, RN, BSN, MS, CNOR
Nursing Professional Development Specialist

Cynthia Garcia, RN, BSN, MTHS, CNOR
Nursing Professional Development Specialist

Derrick McLean, CST, CRCST
Consultant, Peri-Operative Education and Quality