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Preparing baccalaureate nursing students to be microsystem leaders

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Historically leadership courses developed for undergraduate nursing education programs have focused on identifying personal skills deemed essential for students. These skills primarily relate to personal traits and qualities that identify students' self-knowledge, communication skills, risk taking, and delegation. What is lacking is the concept and components of system leadership. Growing talent of nurse leaders from within the organizational and microsystem level is important in meeting the IOM report on the Future of Nursing. Knowledge of system leadership helps nurses identify the structures, processes, and outcomes present in a clinical microsystem. Strong clinical Microsystems are the precursor of a healthy work environment.

In a clinical microsystem leadership course, there are three main concepts. Those are leadership, microsystem, and healthy work environment. Leadership is the ability to motivate others to accomplish goals. The concept of a microsystem is the combination of small groups of people working together to provide care to specific subpopulation of patient (Nelson et al. 2007). Healthy work environments recognize the ability to achieve positive patient outcomes through the use of skill communication, meaningful recognition, authentic leadership, true collaboration, effective decision making and appropriate staffing (AACN Standard for Excellence, 2005). It is through the integration of these concepts that students become aware of the importance of understanding their work environment and their role in that environment.

"The microsystem is the structural unit responsible for delivering care to specific patient populations or frontline places where patient, families and care teams meet" (2008 AACN Essentials, p. 38). Clinical Microsystems are the basic building blocks of all healthcare systems. It is a combination of a small groups of people who work together on a regular basis to provide care and the subpopulation of patients who receive that care (Nelson, Batalden, & Godfrey. 2007). This is the environment where the nurse participates in a broad mixture of direct and indirect patient care delivery processes. Within this environment nurses are expected to demonstrate leadership skills. This presentation will provide the participants with the beginning concepts and content needed to present a system leadership course in undergraduate nursing curriculums.

Purpose: The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate how a School of Nursing transformed the traditional leadership curricula in nursing education by integrating the principles of system leadership and elements of a healthy work environment. This presentation will also explore how the course was design using the Donabedian framework.

Target Audience: Target audience for this presentation will include nursing educators from both academic and clinical institution, nursing administrators and academic administrators.

Target Group(s): Clinical, Academic, Administrative

Keywords: Leadership, Microsystem and Undergraduate Education