

PROFESSIONAL ROLE CLARITY: IMPACT ON ADOPTION OF EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE

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Purpose/Objectives

Purpose: To develop the RN workforce and improve clinical practice using a structured professional role development program that facilitates a professional RN role orientation to practice.

Objective: To use a data driven, evidence based approach to assessing the professional role orientation of RNs in order to identify potential gaps in professional role clarity that could hinder the journey to practice excellence and achievement of Magnet® status.

Background/Significance

As professionals, RNs are expected to deliver care and manage work environments based on current evidence and scientific knowledge. Variation in understanding of professional role expectations is viewed as a contributor to variation in practice that could potentially impact quality of care. Nurse leaders at this 411 bed tertiary level, community hospital on the Magnet® journey sought to better understand the professional role orientation of their RN workforce. This resulted in the adoption of the O'Rourke Model of the Professional Role as the conceptual framework and use of the Professional Role Development Guide™ (PRDG). Professional role behaviors and level of expertise were measured based on a novice to expert scale. This included the measurement of evidence-based approaches to practice.

Description of Methods/Procedures

RNs completed an intensive role development program (N=609). In phase one each participant completed a self assessment utilizing a valid and reliable 86 item Professional Role Development Guide™ (PRDG) to evaluate their professional role orientation based on a model of integrated professional roles of: leader, scientist, transferor and practitioner. In phase two a peer evaluator completed the PRDG on the participant, then peer and participant met to compare scores and to agree on a final score through an interactive process.

Outcomes

Data suggested variation in professional role clarity and role competency among RNs. RNs consistently scored themselves lower in the scientist role component relative to other role components, indicating needed improvements in evidence-based practice competencies for the RN workforce.

In response to these findings the organization implemented structures to support the scientist role development.

These included:

- The establishment of an academic-service partnership with local California State University Northridge faculty to provide facilitation and expertise in evidence-based practice
- Educational programs on evidence-based practice and poster development
- Initiation of an annual evidence-based practice day in collaboration with the local chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International and local university for RN staff and BSN students to present Performance Improvement (PI), research, and EBP projects by poster and podium presentations

Three-year outcomes indicate increased engagement in professional role behaviors related to the scientist role component as evidenced by the following:

- Increase in clinical inquiry by RNs through formation of workgroups to evaluate nursing practices using PI methods and/or implementing EBP projects based on the IOWA model. Examples include:
 - Evaluation of methods for lifting patients in ICU
 - Interdisciplinary team practices during RRT
 - Methods for securing NG tubes
 - Establishment of perinatal bereavement program
- Increase in dissemination of professional practice knowledge, evidenced through submission of seven abstracts to conferences with seven accepted to date

Conclusions

A data driven, evidence-based approach using the valid and reliable PRDG tool to measure professional role clarity informed both the organization & RNs of professional role development needs and continues to serve as a successful organizational & professional RN guide to facilitate professional role orientation to evidence based practice.

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