Background

Novice nurse internship programs have expanded in number and scope with organizations realizing the significant benefits of the programs that support novice nurses transition to practice. In 2013, New Hanover Regional Medical Center focused on cultivating the knowledge, skills, judgement and ability of new graduates in the critical care environment. The program’s objectives focused on cultivating the knowledge, skills, judgement and ability to:

• Develop effective clinical decision making skills, judgment and performance
• Develop and implement clinical leadership skills
• Improve patient safety, care, and outcomes
• Effectively demonstrate communication and collaboration with the interdisciplinary team.
• Utilize evidence-based research at the bedside

With the demographic profile changing and shifting and increasing number of new graduate nurses entering the health care arena it has become apparent that organizations must provide support and guidance through the transition from student to new graduate nurse. The transition challenges the novice nurse both mentally, emotionally, and physically and requires support to navigate the enormous shift in responsibility and accountability. The new graduate nurse has no expectation of the situations, experiences, or emotions they may encounter or how to integrate coping strategies and support into their practice. Stress within the critical care arena is magnified due to the high patient mortality and morbidity, daily confrontations with ethical dilemmas, and a tension-charged atmosphere that can increase the prevalence of psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, burnout syndrome, and posttraumatic stress disorder (Mealear, et al., 2014).

Project Aim

The aim of our proposal is to create and develop a support group led by a specialized collaborative team to provide novice nurses with the skills and support to continue in their transition into practice. The specialized collaborative group will effectively promote and encourage the transition while assisting in the development of the nurse’s knowledge, skill, and attitudes needed to progress through their first year of clinical practice (Chandler, 2012). Utilizing the group in conjunction with the new graduate internship program will provide the nurses with interventions tailored to deal with negative emotions and develop interventions aimed at improving nurse’s emotional intelligence (Zhu, Lai, Guo, Lin, & Lou, 2015).

The collaborative team focuses on the development of compassionate, collaborative care and supports emotional intelligence and coping strategies. Cultivating a group that encourages, supports, and develops the ability to recognize emotions, generate and reason the emotions, and to understand and reflect on their emotions is an important skill and ability (Judeh, 2013).

Project Design

Utilizing Lazarus’ cognitive evaluation theory and the fundamental ideas of the cognitive-relational theory of emotion and coping we developed a framework that focuses on the individual, the environment and on the simultaneous demands and stimuli that nurses face daily. The frequency of stressors and multiple forms of stress impose the need for every nurse to assess their ability and be supported in developing strategies to cope with the variety of issues that may contribute to stress and ultimately contribute to burnout, compassion fatigue, and turnover.

The program consists of:

• An initial “Get to Know You Session” with a Licensed Social Worker to build rapport with the new graduate nurses and express the goals of the program. The meeting occurs the first week of clinical orientation.
• Initial meeting focuses on the importance of the development of coping strategies to manage daily stressors and identification of ineffective coping.
• Each new graduate nurse completes the initial Professional Quality of Life Test to self-reflect and support individual goals of the program.
• Each month for six months 1 hour - 1½ hour meeting during didactic week focused on peer support, individual stressors each nurse has encountered, and a new technique to manage stress and cope.
• Spontaneous support meetings for the individual nurse or group as issues arise.
• Discussion of topics and integration of empathy, emotional intelligence, burnout, compassionate fatigue, occupational stressors, and principles of compassion care that positively and negatively affect clinical care and patient outcomes.
• Post reflection and completion of the Professional Quality of Life Test.
• Post survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Results

New Graduate Nurse Counseling

Results from survey of new graduate nurses participating in the counseling process. Results showed that the program was very welcomed, desired and supported by the new nurses as a benefit to their practice.

Conclusions

Nurses respond to the various demands that contribute to compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, burnout, and vicarious traumatization which can deeply impact the new graduate nurse’s ability to be successful in health care. (Najjar et al. 2009; Devilly, Wright & Barker, 2009) Developing and implementing strategies to support the new graduate nurse, promote resilience, coping skills, and self-care will foster a successful transition. Utilizing the skills learned, in conjunction with the multidisciplinary team, new nurses can build a foundation of collaborative, compassionate care that will support strategies and skills to maintain their role in critical care. The impact of this program extends to the organization, the unit, the individual nurse, the patient, and their family. The compassionate, collaborative care framework can improve quality, enrich patient care, and family experience and support clinician well-being. The new graduates discovered a support group and the ability to cope with their challenges while also contributing to an otherwise difficult environment.

References:


“Leading Our Community To Outstanding Health”