**Identifying Motivators and Barriers to Returning to School for a BSN Degree Among RNs Employed at a Community Hospital**

Anita Shoup, DNP, RN, CNOR
anita.shoup@swedish.org

**Problem**

Application for Magnet status requires an action plan demonstrating evidence of progress toward increasing the number of Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree prepared registered nurses (RNs) employed at a community hospital from less than 50% currently to 80% by the year 2020.

**Purpose**

To assess the barriers and motivators that facilitate or inhibit the pursuit of a BSN among RNs employed at a community hospital where have less than a BSN degree and are not in the cohort required to earn a BSN degree.

**Background**

- The American Association of Colleges of Nursing recognizes the BSN as the minimum educational requirement for professional nursing practice.\(^1\)
- The Institute of Medicine Report recommends that 80% of the RN workforce should hold at least a baccalaureate degree by 2020.\(^2\)
- Numerous studies have demonstrated that higher proportions of nurses with BSN degrees staffed on a unit significantly reduce patient mortality and failure to rescue.\(^1,3,4,5\)
- Only 13.1 percent of diploma graduates and 12.1 percent of ADN graduates obtain a BSN.\(^6\)

**Evidence Based Practice (EBP) Solution**

This EBP quality improvement (QI) project is the assessment phase of a larger project to provide an action plan demonstrating evidence of progress toward having 80% of the RN staff obtain a degree in nursing by 2020.

**Survey Development**

- Determined to be QI and not human subject research by the University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the community hospital’s research approval committee.
- A 24 item survey was developed based on the literature with four identified themes—work, personal, academic and financial. Participants were asked to rate each of the statements using a 5-point Likert-type scale with 1 equal to Strongly Disagree and 5 equal to Strongly Agree. Eight demographic questions were included.
- The survey was assessed for content validity. A pretest was conducted to evaluate clarity of instructions and questions, formatting and readability. The survey was assessed for reliability and was found to be internally consistent (Cronbach alpha = .83).

**Setting and Participants**

- 127-bed suburban, community hospital which provides acute surgical, medical and behavioral services in Washington State.
- RNs employed at a community hospital who are:
  - prepared at the entry to practice level with an ADN or diploma from a hospital school of nursing, or
  - not currently enrolled in a BSN program and
  - employed after required to acquire a BSN within five years of employment was implemented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Number of years since licensed as RN</th>
<th>Total Full-Time Hours Employed as RN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N (%)</td>
<td>25 (77)</td>
<td>28 (83)</td>
<td>24.4 (11.5)</td>
<td>20.1 (11.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results**

- The survey was assessed for reliability and was found to be internally consistent (Cronbach alpha = .83).

**Significant Relationships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Students’ Intent</th>
<th>Intent</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Year of Program Preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Returning to school for a BSN will help me advance in my career</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving school for a BSN will hurt my employment prospects</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family responsibilities hinder me from returning to school</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial concerns encourage me to continue my education</td>
<td>p &gt; 0.05</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**References**


**Model Application**

The framework guiding this project is the Program Action Logic Model from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Nursing: Nursing Caring Model. This model has been successfully used for program development in nursing and will guide the project through implementation of an action plan.

**Implications**

Based on the findings, possible interventions may include, but not be limited to:

- sharing the research regarding the impact of BSN education on patient outcomes with nursing staff
- sharing survey results with nursing staff to engage them in thinking about returning to school
- sharing survey results with nurse educators and other nurse leaders to address identified issues such as reimbursement and scheduling
- increasing staff exposure to and participation in professional practice issue projects such as research and QI projects, nursing rounds, journal clubs and similar activities
- implementing a mentor program pairing ADN nurses with RNs who are currently enrolled in or have recently graduated from an RN to BSN program
- bringing advisors from RN to BSN programs to the campus to speak directly with staff regarding returning to school
- issues which may need to be addressed by nurse educators and other nurse leaders include:
  - flexibility of work schedules
  - additional pay for RNs holding a BSN or higher degree
  - focusing on nurses < 50 years of age who indicate more of an interest in pursuing further education than nurses >50 years of age who do not
  - acquisition or development of a method to track RN education level

**Benefit to Nursing at the Community Hospital**

This assessment gathered information not currently available that will be useful in developing an intervention addressing the cohort of RNs who lack BSN preparation and assisting them in the pursuit of a BSN. Interventions to address this cohort of RNS and assist them in the pursuit of a BSN can be predicted to positively effect the outcomes of patients receiving care at the community hospital.

---


