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Using preceptor/preceptee responses to enhance the quality of the clinical experience

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Preceptorship has been identified as an effective strategy for facilitating clinical learning among diverse health care professionals including nursing students and advanced practice nurses (e.g., Nurse Practitioners). The benefits of preceptor experiences are well documented within the health care student literature; however, barriers to the preceptorship experience have also been identified. Thus, the purpose of this study was to further evaluate the preceptorship experience within the Ontario Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner (PHCNP) Program where preceptorship is an integral component. The study used a cross sectional design with an online survey and open-ended questions. The sample included 77 preceptees (recent graduates of the PHCNP program) and 169 preceptors from the PHCNP program. Descriptive data from the preceptee and preceptor survey responses were generally positive regarding the preceptorship experience with the preceptors having more favorable responses. While overall responses were positive, approximately 35% of preceptees identified at least one negative clinical experience and preceptors identified challenges to being a preceptor. Common facilitators and barriers to the preceptorship experience were identified. Facilitators included a clinical learning environment that had adequate space and diverse learning opportunities. The common barriers included aspects of the clinical learning environment (too small, too specialized, too slow), time (too busy), unclear expectations and lack of communication. Consideration should be given to addressing the barriers as they are amenable to intervention and could potentially enhance the preceptorship experience.

Biography

Karen McQueen is an Associate Professor with the School of Nursing at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario and Graduate Coordinator of the Master of Public Health (Nursing) and Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Programs. She has graduated from the University of Toronto with a PhD in Nursing in 2009. With an extensive background in perinatal nursing and education, her main clinical and research interests include breastfeeding promotion and intervention, the early identification and treatment of mothers with postpartum depression, care of infants with neonatal abstinence syndrome and preceptorship as a strategy to enhance clinical learning.

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