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Preparing the novice nurse to care for veterans through a nurse residency program

Marcia Lysaght and Marilly Cadavid

Miami Veterans Affairs Healthcare System, USA

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is the largest integrated health care system in the United States, providing care at 1,243 health care facilities, including 172 VA Medical Centers and 1,062 outpatient sites of care of varying complexity (VHA outpatient clinics) to over 9 million Veterans enrolled in the VA health care program.. At a local VA facility, 38% of registered nurses were retirement eligible, leading to a potential risk of a nurse staffing crisis. To mitigate the risk, an RN residency program was implemented with a goal of ensuring a pipeline of competent nurses to fill immediate and future nursing vacancies. Nurse Residency Programs (NRP) aim to provide the novice nurse transition to autonomous and competent clinical practice. Newly registered nurses (NRN) are often overwhelmed with the role demands and perceived lack of support to help guide them through the difficult transition in a highly complex healthcare settings. A veteran-centric NRP that is evidence based and well-structured, has been demonstrated to be a viable, cost effective solution, to addressing the challenges NRNs face as well as mitigating the high rate of turnover. The NRP is modeled after the National Council of State Boards of Nursing and accredited by Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) that includes didactic, experiential, and leadership learning opportunities, clinical rotations throughout the continuum of care incorporating interprofessional collaboration. CCNE accreditation was received through rigorous site visit in which the NRP must demonstrate multi-tiered evaluation plan that meets the four CCNE standards for entry to practice.

Marilly.Cadavid@va.gov; marcia.lysaght@va.gov