Exploring Perceptions of Staff Registered Nurse Preceptors for Undergraduate, Pre-licensure Nursing Students

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Disclosure

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Learner Objectives
Participants will be able to:
1. discuss the perceptions of nurse preceptors with regard to preparation for, support in, and understanding of their role; and
2. identify areas of research related to nursing preceptorships that offer potential for growth and expansion.
Disclosure

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General Information

- Preceptorships around since mid-1970s
- Still have problems
Problem Statement

- Nurses may view teaching and supervising students as an additional burden, time-consuming, and not part of their role (Bowles & Candela; 2005; Grant, et al., 1996; Grindel, et al., 2001), but may be expected to serve as preceptors without having the opportunity to have their voice heard or to ask questions (Happell, 2009; Yonge, Krahn, Trojan, Reid, & Haase, 2002).

- Left unattended, work discomfort can have deleterious consequences on nurses’ overall well-being, work performance, and satisfaction, and can include discontentment, distrust, apathy, and decreased provision of quality care (Bowles & Candela, 2005; Murray, 2008; Paris & Terhaar, 2011).
Purpose

• To explore staff nurse experiences as preceptors to undergraduate, pre-licensure nursing students.

• Emphasis on RN’s perceptions of preparation for, support, and understanding of the preceptor role.
Question & Methodology

- What are staff nurses’ experiences with precepting undergraduate, pre-licensure nursing students?

- Qualitative exploratory with focus groups
FINDINGS
Preparation for the Role

- Described as a formal education process provided in classroom setting at place of employment; not essential for the role.

“Teaching & Learning Styles: ‘It keeps me grounded’”

- Perceived as most influential
Support in the Role

- Co-workers: A helping function
  - Sharing the responsibility
  - Problem-solving

- Faculty: A validating function
  - Invisible presence
  - Lack of time
  - Feeling validated or invalidated

- Managers: A mechanical function
  - Being selected to serve
  - Preparing staff
Understanding the Role

“Motivation to serve: ‘It’s how I wanted to be treated’”

- Motivation emanates from strong empathetic drive

- Preceptor behavior directed at benefiting the student and preserving the nursing profession.
UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE

Empathy

Motivation to Precept: "It's how I wanted to be treated"

Protector
Protecting the student
Protecting the profession

Socializer
Helping the student
Integrating the student

Teacher
Searching for time
Making assessments
Making adjustments
“Protecting the student: ‘Take [th]’em under my wing’”

- Assume responsibility for and nurture the student’s professional and personal growth
- Shelter and encourage
- Desire to change the perception of horizontal & lateral violence
“Protecting the profession: ‘Nobody knows everything’”

- Perceived students with overconfident attitudes as potentially unsafe

- Did not view inexperience negatively

- Students as direct reflections of themselves
“Helping the student: ‘Let me’”

- Latent process that stems from the preceptor’s empathy
- Recognizes student’s needs
- Use of the phrase “let me”
“Integrating the student: ‘We didn’t mesh’”

- Assessed student’s attitude or motivation
- Made a determination about fit with the unit
- Made decisions about integration, or socialization, into the environment
“Searching for time: ‘We’re tryin’[g] to do the best we can’”

- Students pushed to the background
- Many other responsibilities contributed to the difficulty of finding time for students
“Making assessments: ‘You have to evaluate each person’”

- Iterative process influencing:
  - Preceptor interactions with the student
  - How preceptors adjust their precepting

- Emphatic regarding overconfident or resistant attitudes in students
“Making adjustments: ‘I’m pushing and pulling’”

- Active process for preceptor
- Expectation that student is active
- Can be invigorating or overwhelming
- Adjust precepting and make adaptations to meet the individual student’s needs
Discussion Highlights

• Preparation
  ◦ Teaching/learning styles important, but formal class may be not be essential

• Faculty support
  ◦ Conflicting reports of availability
  ◦ Expected validation
  ◦ Did not want or need more contact with faculty
Discussion Highlights

- Manager support

★ New finding is the perceived support from nurse managers in preparing staff for the arrival of students as potential employees.
Discussion Highlights

- Preceptor as protector

New finding is that of protector of self & professional ethos

- No identified studies regarding motivation to serve
Discussion Highlights

- Teacher

- Preceptors more concerned with students’ motivation and attitudes
  - Limited information about methods that preceptors use to teach core professional values
Future Research

- Perceptions of managers’ support of nurses in the preceptor role
- Exploring support as it exists between and among RN co-workers
- Exploring preceptors’ motivation to serve
- Preceptors as protectors of self & profession
Implications

- Focus on issues of students’ professional attitudes
- Methods to assess attitudes & professional qualities should be clear
- Faculty ensure affective outcomes receive adequate attention
- Review clinical evaluation tools with preceptors
References


