

**Mentoring Novice Nurses in Healthcare Organizations**

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**ABSTRACT**

Mentoring in nursing has been shown to be an essential component to the development of a new nurse as demonstrated by Patricia Benner's novice to expert theory. Mentorship plays a vital role in attracting, educating, and retaining new nurses as they progress from novice to expert during their career. Mentoring is not a new concept in nursing. The nursing shortage continues to be an issue in various locations in the United States, and will increase by 2030. The other major concern is the predication that 55% of the current practicing nurses plan to retire by 2020. Healthcare organizations need to be proactive and start implementing mentoring programs sooner than later. There has been emerging evidence that supports the value of mentoring. The goal of this research study was to perform a comprehensive literature review on mentoring.

**Keywords:** Mentoring, Retention, Patricia Benner, Nursing Shortage

**Introduction:**

There is some confusion among the nursing community when it comes to the idea of mentoring. To many nurses, mentoring can easily be confused with preceptorship, coaching, or teaching. The truth is that mentoring is all of these, and much more. Mentoring goes beyond these ideas in the form of a bond between the mentor and mentee, and helps new nurses develop their nursing skills inside and outside of the clinical setting. The literature review will look at the current literature on mentoring, different concepts involved in mentoring relationships, and possible benefits to mentorship programs.

**Nursing Theory:**

Patricia Benner's Theory supports the idea of novice nurses moving through various stages of their careers to enhance their own development and competency. Benner's five levels of professional nursing practice consists of novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. A novice is a beginner with no real experience and he or she is expected to perform in a role that is unfamiliar. A novice nurse who has experience from previous health care positions will be able to maneuver through the first level to the second level much faster than a new nurse

with no experience. Proficient and expert level nurses should be highly encouraged to be involved in a mentoring relationship to help educate, demonstrate, and be a role model for novice nurses. A proficient nurse has learned from experience and is able to apply previous knowledge to different patients and to their medical situations. The expert level has an enormous background and real experiences and is able to apply them to different settings and patients.

### **Education needed for mentors**

There are numerous studies on the need for education for the mentor and for the mentee. Along with this there are common themes that support the need for education. A study by Kiger and Skela-Savic was done to explain the different dimensions of clinical mentors' professional development and their capability of role modelling ethical values in novice nurses. The authors of this research distributed a survey to 292 clinical nurses working across 20 healthcare settings, and 143 participants returned surveys, with an average age between 26-33 years old, with 83.9% having a professional higher education, and 43.4% being employed for more than ten years. The results showed that nursing managers often failed to assume responsibility for the professional development of clinical mentors. . Employee satisfaction level directly correlated with the implementation of a professional development plan, demonstrating that mentorship had a direct reflect on job satisfaction. The lack of nursing leadership which effected mentorship and career development led to lower job satisfaction and a perceived reduced ability to provide competent mentorship.

In a fact sheet developed by Heering and Schub, 2016, outlines the difference between mentorship and coaching. Mentorship is defined as a long-term, voluntary, collaborative, and mutually beneficial relationship that is broad in focus and intent. A mentor is an experienced professional that teaches, supports, and encourages a less experienced novice as that person advances professionally and personally and adapts to a new role. Although mentorship requires the use of coaching skills, one does not need to be a mentor to be a coach. Goals are different between the terms. . The coach promotes the development of necessary skills and focuses on helping with the development of new behaviors and attitudes to enhance learner performance and effectiveness, as where the goal of the mentor is to increase the mentee's confidence in their skills and in their ability to become competent nurses and later a nurse leader.

These differences are important to define as defined roles can lead to an increase in the effectiveness of the mentor-mentee relationship. Education on how to be mentor with specific guidelines will go a long way in promoting and encouraging nurses to become mentors. The key point of education and to encourage nurses to become mentors is the need to reduce the workload of the mentor while providing education/guidance to the mentee. .

The authors reviewed a study that was completed in seven university hospitals in Belgium. The investigators, De Tobel, Huybrecht, Loeckx, Mistiaen, and Quaeyhaegens in 2011, noted that many of their participants (51% out of 112) had some form of formal education on mentorship.

The key points identified by their qualitative study was that respondents considered the need for mentors to be trust worthy, able to provide guidance, being a problem solver, and able to evaluate a mentee.

### **Increasing Retention of Nurses**

Mentorship has been identified as a strategy to increase retention of nurses by helping to enculturate the new graduates and prepare them for their new role. Mentorship appears to reap many positive benefits for new nurses, including increased confidence and competency in the practice of nursing, reduced work stress, personal and professional growth, increased job satisfaction, enhanced communication and leadership skills, and development of interpersonal relationships with other nurses. Numerous articles discuss the fact that positive work environments play a huge role in easing the transition for novice nurses and that includes recruitment and retention. Mentorship, especially in rural areas can improve the recruitment and retention of employees in these environments. Novice nursing staffs in rural areas are typically in charge of the whole facility, especially on night shifts. This is a huge commitment, accountability, and responsibility. Novice nurses need to feel comfortable dealing with the unknown and unexpected. Mentorship programs were seen as integral components in assisting with staff recruitment, transition, and retention. The retention of staff at a rural location are important as they are usually limited on extra staff, have limited resources, and they can have difficulty recruiting new nurses. . Turnover in rural facilities can be detrimental to the flow and care of the patients, and with mentoring; your chances of retaining nurses can increase exponentially.

It can be a challenge to provide mentoring for a nurse. However, as the literature demonstrates it is often during the initial 90 days of working the novice can become stressed, overwhelmed, frustrated, and disempowered. Anxiety and apprehension are feelings that hinder this transition which can lead to low motivation, low productivity and poor patient outcomes. Having the experienced mentor allows the novice nurse to establish a firmer foundation of nursing knowledge and a holistic understanding of clinical situations. Positive mentoring relationships may be a career lifeline that creates a trusted partner who eases the feelings of loneliness and stress that can stifle professional development.

### **Transition from student to novice nurse**

A pilot study completed by Gardiner and Sheen in 2017 investigated the association between feedback and anxiety, while also exploring the feedback and support experiences of graduate nurses. This was a mixed methods study design using an online survey that included 107 Australian graduate nurses. Overall the study found that to a significant effect, graduate nurses that received a high amount of feedback had significantly lower levels of anxiety as compared to graduate nurses that received a decreased amount of feedback. The lack of structure support, and guidance of graduate nurses varies by institution, and even though graduate nurses are similar

throughout healthcare, their orientation varies from floor to floor, and hospital to hospital. This pilot study demonstrated that mentoring, positive feedback, and support are very beneficial to the novice nurse. Many new graduates feel unprepared for the demands of practice and struggle with mastery of clinical skills, time management, development of clinical judgement, and the need to manage a heavier patient load. They need support through this transition period and this can be accomplished by the implementation of mentoring program. By utilizing the mentoring relationship, which is a supportive relationship between experienced individuals and those in need of guidance, organizations are able to facilitate a faster and healthier transition to a practice role.

An article was written by Sheena Berezuk in 2010 and outlined the role of mentors in emergency care. This was specifically aimed at the recently graduated nursing care staff, regarding their transition from novice to expert. Many new graduates felt unprepared for the demands of practice and struggle with mastery of clinical skills, time management, development of clinical judgement, and the need to manage a heavier patient load. They need support through this period and this can be accomplished by the implementation of mentoring arrangements. By utilizing the mentoring relationship, which is a supportive relationship between experienced individuals and those in need of guidance, organizations are able to facilitate a faster and healthier transition to a practice role.

The transition from RN to a Nurse Practitioner (NP) role was explored by Barnes in 2015. The two major factors that facilitate the transition process are prior RN experience and receiving a formal orientation like mentorship. The research study used a survey of practicing NPs with 352 participants. A 5-point Likert Scale was used to determine their transition experience with concepts such as feeling supported verses isolated, feeling prepared to manage time, and understanding their role as an NP from patients, other staff, and physicians. Results showed that only 33% of the participants had a formal orientation and perceived it as a positive experience. With the knowledge gained from this study, healthcare organizations can improve or develop formal orientations and mentorship opportunities available for new NPs to help with the transition process.

### **Cost**

In the United States, it is estimated that approximately 75% of registered nurses are between the ages of 50-65. It is also indicated that 55% plan to retire by 2020. Orientation, education, and having a preceptor is an expensive cost to healthcare organizations. The average cost for a novice nurse to complete their orientation is around \$62,000-\$67,000, depending on the unit. Specialty units, such as ICU's are more costly. Mentoring programs can ensure that the cost is beneficial to the organization. An example of a successful mentorship program took place in a hospital in California. After one year, the turnover rate had declined from 20% down to 7%. The new graduate turnover rate was less than 10% in each of the subsequent 6 years. Though the annual

cost of this program was \$58,000, the program led to an estimated savings of more than \$300,000 in the first-year due to reductions in expenditures related to recruitment and training.

### Conclusion

Mentorship is an essential component for novice nurses as they progress from Patricia Benner's theory; novice to expert either as a new nurse, or as a novice nurse in a new specialty area. Studies have shown that mentoring has been a productive and successful approach for attracting, educating, and retaining nurses. It is evident how important nursing mentorships are and the differences they can make to a healthcare organization. Educated mentors are the key to a successful and productive program. .

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