

Enhancing the Long-term Care Workforce Through a Nurse Residency Program

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Purpose: The goal of a Long-Term Care (LTC) Nurse Residency Program (NRP) is to guide transition from the student or other nurse roles to a professional LTC nurse role, and provide the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a LTC environment. In addition, the program aims to prepare LTC nurses to care for complex older residents and to lead staff.

Background

- LTC-NRP, funded by a Health Resources and Services Agency (HRSA) Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP), seeks to integrate primary care and geriatric care into the LTC setting to improve health care delivery to LTC residents.
- The paucity of geriatric nursing and quality improvement (QI) content in undergraduate (UG) nursing curricula highlights the need for an NRP.
- Many LTC nurses lack knowledge and understanding in the care of the complex older resident, and in initiating and participating in QI projects.
- LTC-NRP was developed after extensive literature review, input from a LTC nurse advisory committee, and support from the Utah Action Coalition for Health organization.
- Once content areas were identified including review of the 19 gerontological nursing competency statements in the AACN *Recommended Baccalaureate Competencies and Curricular Guidelines for the Nursing Care of Older Adults*, an online course was developed.
- Result:** 9-month program, containing weekly modules in 3 core topic areas: 1) leadership/ communication, 2) care for the >65 year old adult, and 3) the LTC regulatory environment.

Methods

- Collaborated with LTC partners, Utah’s QI organization, and other gerontology experts on program design.
- Developed an evidenced-based LTC gerontology curriculum for an online course.
- Created evaluation tools, which included Likert scales and open-ended questions, to assess the program’s impact on geriatric knowledge and skills gained; self-rated efficacy of geriatric nursing competencies; and attitudes towards quality improvement.
- Recruited nurses with an Associate Degree or higher who were new to LTC, and worked at facilities of three champion LTC employer organizations.

Results:

- Four cohorts over four years; 27 nurses completed
- 96% female; 26% RNs, 63% BSNs, and 11% LPNs
- Prior to NRP, 64% had not completed a geriatric rotation (Fig. 1)
- Nurse residents worked at both rural and urban facilities (Fig. 2)
- At the completion of the program, nurses were asked open-ended questions (Table 1).

Table 1: Post-NRP Survey

What did you gain from this residency?	Geriatric nursing skills, interprofessional communication, managing difficult conversations, and completing a quality improvement project <ul style="list-style-type: none">“Greater knowledge of how to do quality control projects and team based practices of caring for the elderly”“I learned new information about my field and how to better myself”
What content was the most helpful and why?	Teamwork material and communication skills, resident-care, quality improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none">“I feel communication was the most helpful content because it showed us ways that we can guide our conversations with our residents and their families. This allows us to help the residents and their families feel comfortable so that we can get the information we need to take care of them.”“I also was very impressed with the unit on de-prescribing medications. I feel this is important, especially with hospice residents.”“I liked the module about having the difficult conversation. this is something i have always struggled with.”
What was the best part about participating and why?	Learning from other nurses <ul style="list-style-type: none">“Got to hear/read experiences from other nurses and how they reacted to situations”“I was able to expand my knowledge base and found that it helped me in my job as I applied the concepts and was better able to complete tasks and help out other nurses who were struggling. Validation all homes have issues and areas to improve”
How have you used what you have learned?	Overall, the nurse residents reported that they felt more confident in their skills, were better equipped to serve patients, and had brought aspects of the residency back to their workplace. <ul style="list-style-type: none">“I have been better able to care for residents at the end of life and help their families”“I involve staff more and explain things better”“I have been better able to educate staff, communicate with others”

FIG. 1 COMPLETED GERIATRIC ROTATION

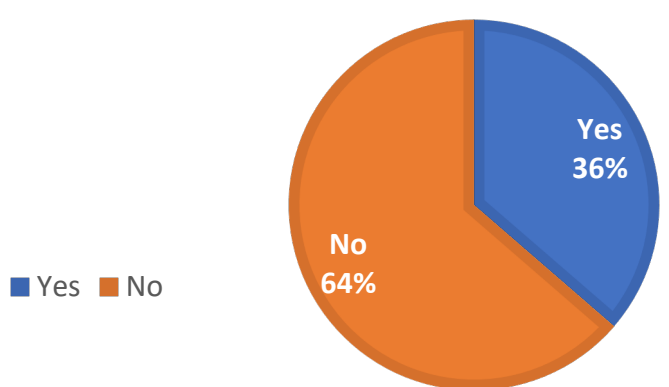
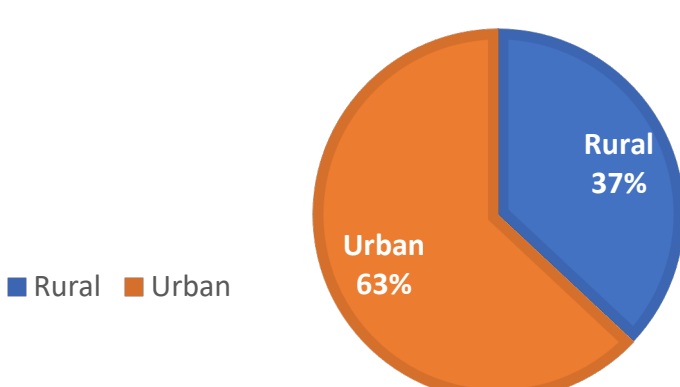


FIG. 2 WORKPLACE SETTING



Conclusions:

- Based on our findings:
 - A LTC-NRP better prepares practicing nurses in meeting numerous LTC challenges through supplementing their education with geriatric nursing-focused content, leadership skills, and QI expertise.
- Survey results demonstrated the effectiveness of the NRP:
 - Increased knowledge and confidence to provide necessary care for LTC residents
 - Increased knowledge to complete a QI project
 - Gained geriatric nursing skills, and increased self-efficacy when having interprofessional communications and managing difficult conversations
- NRP changes were made in response to nurse’s feedback:
 - Shortened program from a 9-month to a 5-month, distance-based program
 - Weekly content kept to 3-4 hour/week commitment
 - Completely asynchronous, online course

Discussion:

- Next steps:
 - Meeting with our champion partners to assess the content they would like covered in the next offering
 - For 2021, recruiting nurses from LTC, Assisted Living Facilities (ALFs), and Home Health and Hospice agencies
 - Virtual “Bootcamp” Training for the new cohort in January 2021
- Curriculum revisions and additions
 - Long-term Support services (LTSS) regulatory content
 - Age-Friendly Care using the 4Ms Framework for LTSS nurses
 - Threading QI project throughout each week
 - Skills for working in crisis mode (ex. pandemic)

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