Abstract

Professional nurses play a central role in delivering primary care in cardiovascular units of small community hospitals. Such specialty units require advance preparation of nurses. The problem addressed in this project was the lack of a formal orientation program for newly hired nurses which led to less consistent preparation of nurses for service, and resulted in low job satisfaction and poor retention. The purpose of this quality improvement project was to develop evidence-based curriculum for a preceptorship program in a small cardiac specialty unit, and plans for implementation and evaluation. The short-term goal for this program is to improve newly hired professional nurses' level of preparation for service in a cardiovascular unit; the long-term goal is to improve job satisfaction and retention. An interdisciplinary Quality Improvement Committee of institutional stakeholders assembled under the Doctor of Nursing Practice student's leadership to develop the curriculum. Subsequent meetings included comparative analysis discussions of best practices, involving direct metrics supplied by human resources. An external review was conducted by 4 nationally-recognized experts in the area of nurse preparation and revisions were made to address perceived needs. Formal plans for implementation and evaluation of the curriculum were then developed, yielding the final product of the Project: a turnkey solution to an existing practice problem. Evaluation utilized the Benner's Model of Skill Acquisition in Nursing, which outlines a progression from novice to expert (Benner, 1984). A program that promotes advanced preparation of nurses along with improved retention and satisfaction holds the potential to serve as a model for other units within the facility and to ultimately promote higher quality in care.