



Experiences of Preceptors in Dedicated Education Units in the Public Hospital Environment

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PURPOSE

- To provide data on which to develop a method to evaluate experiences of preceptors of nursing students on a dedicated education unit (DEU)/traditional nursing unit
- To describe the experiences of nurse preceptors who have worked with at least two rotations of nursing students over the last 12 months in a DEU or a traditional nursing unit setting

PROBLEM

- Current faculty shortages, increased patient care acuity, advanced technology, greater system complexity and sophisticated computer systems have resulted in the increased need to use staff nurse preceptors to provide students with clinical instruction and experience.
- More information is needed about the experiences of preceptors of nursing students.

BACKGROUND

- Studies specifically addressing preceptor experiences on DEUs are rare.
- While one instrument to assess preceptor experiences was developed some time ago, it does not appear to have been tested further or used for its created purpose.

METHODS

- Orling's Meaning of Preceptorship Theory guided this cross-sectional qualitative study.
- A total of 11 full-time registered nurses with experience as preceptors on a DEU or traditional medical-surgical nursing units at a complex, county, acute-care hospital were recruited to participate in digitally recorded individual interviews.
- Thematic content analysis was conducted to identify patterns and meanings.
- Common thematic elements of the text were identified.

RESULTS

- Ten of the 11 participants were female. Four were between the ages of 31 - 40 years old, and seven were between the ages of 41 - 60 years old. Six held an ASN degree, and five held a BSN degree. Seven participants reported employment at the agency for a time period of 18 months to three years, and four reported 10 or more years. Nine of the nurses were assigned to the DEU, and two were not. Five of the 11 participants received formal training to be a nurse preceptor.

Three distinct themes emerged:

- Preceptor role
- Student role
- Infrastructure (agency) role

Two subthemes emerged:

- Barriers
- Facilitators

CONCLUSIONS

Findings from this study indicate that the role of preceptor, student and infrastructure and related barriers and facilitators should be considered in the development of instruments to assess nurse preceptor satisfaction.

IMPLICATIONS

- Barriers and facilitators to the preceptor and infrastructure roles should be carefully examined when implementing programs to increase nurse preceptor satisfaction and retention.

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