Introduction

Preparing new nurses to practice independently and more importantly to practice safely has been a priority for nurse leaders in academics. The Institute of Medicine (2011) has recommended that nursing leaders improve how nurses are prepared and educated. The gap between classroom teaching and clinical teaching needs to be closed. Nursing leaders and Educators need to utilize the available resources and partnerships with health care facilities. The development of a dedicated education unit is one strategy to address this gap. Clinical learning encompasses learning experiences that occur in an environment where healthcare is delivered. It also includes the development of critical thinking around experiences to help students uncover the link between theory and practice (NENZNETS, 2007). According to Glazer, Erickson, Mylott, Mulready-Shick, & Banister (2011), creating a vision to engage in a partnership between academic and healthcare facilities would be the start of the process. Furthermore, the nurse leaders would agree to create a cross-institutions task force charged with examining the dedicated unit concept. Although it will require roles’ adjustment from both parties in implementing the new designed dedicated unit module, there was no significant different in the care from the client perspective (Castner, Ceravolo, Tomasov, & Mariano, 2012). This study is a part of a collaborative project between PennState Mont Alto nursing program and a local hospital in development of a dedicated unit for pre-licensed nursing students’ practice. Following the initial dialogues with nursing administrators at the local hospital, an evidence-based review of literature was conducted to be a guideline for the dedicated unit creation. The PICO was used to identify the core elements for the project. A systematic review, suggested by the Johns Hopkins Evidence Based Model (Desholt, & Bang, 2012), provides framework in this review. Results from the review will be a guideline to implement the dedicated unit as a pilot project.

Methods

A systematic review, guided by the Johns Hopkins Nursing Evidence-based Model was conducted to determine the effective DEU. Steps included identify PICO, literature search/selection and analysis utilizing the Johns Hopkins Evidence-based Practice Nursing Model. Steps in conducting EBP review illustrates in the following:

PICO:  

- **P: Lack of module/framework to create DEU in a local health care facility which contracted with a nursing program for students’ practice.** A DEU will be the solution for increase students’ skill and competency clinically and ultimately enhance students’ critical thinking. The DEU will also strengthen the partnership between practice and academia.
- **I: Develop a module/framework for implementing a DEU at a local health care facility which contracted with a nursing program for students’ practice.**
- **C: Effective dedicated unit/traditional students’ clinical practice.**
- **O: Module/framework developed and ready to propose/implement in a local health care facility**

Literature Search:

- The databases searched were Cochrane, ScienceDirect, CINAHL, and Pubmed.
- **Keywords:** Dedicated Education Units/Nursing/Clinical Education, and Prelicensure.
- The total of 41 articles found, twelve peer-reviewed, research and systematic review articles were selected. The summary of all individual selected literature review from 2002-2015 is displayed in Matrix 1, while the analytical summary of the selected literature is shown in Matrix 2.

Matrix 1: Summary of Individual Literature Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Level of Evidence</th>
<th>Study Design</th>
<th>Validity</th>
<th>Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Castner, Ceravolo, Tomasov, &amp; Mariano (2012)</td>
<td>Level I</td>
<td>Quasiexperimental, and randomized controlled experimental design</td>
<td>Good to high</td>
<td>This current systematic review provides a framework for implementation of a DEU for our project as illustrated in Figure 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulready (2012)</td>
<td>Level II</td>
<td>Evidence-based Practice: Model and guidelines. 2nd ed. Indianapolis, IN: Sigma Theta Tau International.</td>
<td>Good to high</td>
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</tbody>
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Results

The result from systematic review provides positive effect toward the implementation of the DEUs for both students and clinical facilities (Nishikoa et al., 2014; Saxton et al., 2014; Wotton & Gonda, 2003) in welcoming atmosphere, commitment to teaching, and quality of clinical supervision. Nursing students perceived the learning in DEUs in 4 themes: consistency, whole picture, professional role development, and sense of investment in student learning (Saxton et al., 2014). Sustainable, mature clinical education partnerships depend on implementing, routinizing, reinforcing, recognizing, and rewarding activities, while Unit level success relies on foundational structures that support the ongoing development of DEU clinical instructors (Mulready-Shick & Flannagan, 2012; Mulready-Shick et al., 2013). Interprofessional DEU could be the solution for limited number of facilities for students’ practice (McVey, Vessey, & Presler, 2014).

Different aspects from the studies revealed implementation strategies that should include curriculum change and organizational culture change (Mulready-Shick, 2012; Wotton & Gonda, 2003). Lesson learned from the literature provide a framework for implementation of a DEU for our project as illustrated in Figure 1.

Matrix 2: Levels of Evidence

<table>
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Conclusions

Studies selected in this systematic review suggested by the Johns Hopkins Evidence-Based Model concluded that there is a benefit of the DEU for student learning compared to the traditional student clinical practice. Evidence pointed out that both academic and practice organizations must embrace the changes. The majority of studies were pilot and preliminary surveys without randomized controlled experimental design. The studies were small scaled research where generalizability was questionable.

The Next Step!

Although there are limitations of studies that test the effectiveness of DEUs for students’ learning, the result from this current systematic review provide framework for development of the DEUs. Research to evaluate the effectiveness of the DEUs should be focused on both students and their RN mentors. Quasi experimental, and randomized controlled experimental research will be a strong proof of its effectiveness. Larger scale of studies in regional, national and global levels should be included in the tendency for changes. The implementation of DEUs will change the face of nursing students’ clinical learning experience and promote strong partnership between academia and practice to the ideal “TEAM NURSING.”

Timeline

- Step 1: Define the need for a DEU (2011)
- Step 2: Literature Review (2012)
- Step 3: Prepare the DEU (2013)
- Step 4: Implement the DEU (2014)
- Step 5: Evaluate the DEU (2015)

Bibliography