



Training Nurses in Clinical Settings

Examining some innovative programs that could help alleviate the nursing shortage

SUMMARY

From 2008 through 2010, researchers at Sepulveda Research Corporation in Sepulveda, Calif., and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) examined the VA Nursing Academy's Enhancing Academic Partnerships Program, which creates partnerships between selected VA facilities and nursing schools (see the [Appendix](#)), and other innovative programs to train nurses in clinical settings. These programs could help alleviate the nursing shortage, expected to grow to up to 1 million by 2020.¹

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) grant supplemented an independent, national evaluation of the academy by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and led by the same researchers as the RWJF grant: Aram Dobalian, Ph.D., J.D., from Sepulveda Research Corporation, and Jack Needleman, Ph.D., from UCLA.

Under the RWJF grant, the researchers conducted a literature review and held a conference on nursing training in clinical settings. By the end of the grant, they had not completed the literature review or two related products (an article with findings and a bibliography on nursing education research). They also had not written an article with conference findings and recommendations.

Results

The project director reported the following results to RWJF:

- A partially completed systematic review of 219 peer-reviewed articles about academic-clinical partnerships to expand nursing faculty within and outside of the VA (published between 1980 and 2010) identified one quasi-experimental study and 14 pre-experimental studies. (Quasi-experimental studies follow an experimental design but do not randomize the experimental and control groups. Pre-experimental studies follow an experimental design but do not have a control group.) The other articles were commentaries or editorials.

¹ U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, 2004.

Twelve of the 15 studies were qualitative, and three contained qualitative and quantitative components.

The limited data suggest a significant need for systematic, quasi-experimental and experimental studies evaluating programs such as the VA Nursing Academy to identify effective approaches to address the nursing shortage, according to the researchers.

In particular, the researchers noted the need for more research to:

- Examine the effectiveness of academic-clinical partnerships
- Measure other approaches that may be effective and efficient in expanding the nursing faculty

They identified these notable gaps in the literature:

- Measures of the quality of clinical instruction
- The role of academic-clinical partnerships in clinical training
- The role of academic-clinical partnerships in facilitating the recruitment of new nursing school graduates into clinical settings
- “Conference on Enhancing Nursing Undergraduate Teaching and Learning in the Clinical Setting: What Do We Know and How Do We Move Forward?” (October 19–21, 2010, in Arlington, Va.), brought together 187 nursing educators, nurses, physicians and policy-makers to share best practices and insights about academic-clinical partnerships, expanding and developing clinical faculty, and nontraditional teaching settings (e.g., clinics for homeless people and nursing homes).

Attendees represented more than 100 organizations, including the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, Department of Veterans Affairs, Health Resources and Services Administration, Rutgers University and the University of California, San Francisco.

The conference consisted of one keynote presentation, four plenary sessions, 12 panel discussions and one workshop. Discussions centered on three themes:

- Building effective academic-clinical partnerships to educate nurses
- Transitioning from clinician to faculty member, including faculty selection and support, integration of clinical faculty and challenges to health care organizations when nurses are removed from their clinical roles
- Strengthening clinical skills and education to help new graduates transition into practice, with a focus on the effectiveness of tools and methods used (e.g., clinical rotations and simulation)

Funding

RWJF supported this project with a grant of \$373,545.

Afterward

According to Dobalian, the research team:

- Continues to work on the literature review, and plans to draft an article with findings and a bibliography on nursing education research
- Plans to assemble a group of experts to review the conference, after which the researchers will write and disseminate an article and a white paper with conference findings and recommendations

The researchers continue to work on the larger evaluation of the VA Nursing Academy scheduled to end in September 2013.

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APPENDIX

The VA Nursing Academy's Enhancing Academic Partnerships Program

The VA Nursing Academy's Enhancing Academic Partnerships Program creates partnerships between selected VA facilities and nursing schools to train nurses in clinical settings. Established in 2007, the program is designed to:

- Expand faculty and professional development
- Increase nursing student enrollment
- Provide opportunities for educational and practice innovations
- Increase recruitment and retention of VA nurses