



Canadian Nursing Students' Association
Association des étudiant(e)s infirmier(ère)s du Canada

Position Statement

Nursing Leadership Development

Submitted: January 2015
Submitted to: CNSA National Assembly
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Replaces Current Statement: Leadership Development, 2009

Introduction and Background

Nursing is a dynamic profession which is as political as it is a discipline involving learned skill sets and differing types of knowing. Nursing combines education, research, and knowledge translation while requiring critical thinking, advocacy, and above all else, leadership. The link between nursing leadership and positive outcomes for patients, organizations, and healthcare workers is well established and long standing (Laschinger et al., 2008). According to the Canadian Nurses Association, "Canada's health system requires a steady supply of visionary and energetic nursing leaders across the domains of the discipline who are credible, courageous, visible and inspiring to others and who have the authority and resources to support modern, innovative, and professional nursing practice" (Canadian Nurses Association, 2009, p. 1).

While much research and knowledge has been collated into the concept of leadership itself, little has been done in order to advance leadership skills and opportunities for nursing student leaders. The landscape of nursing is changing, with a projected nursing shortage in the coming years due to a mass exodus of retiring nurses, a dilution of expertise and thus, leadership knowledge, will also occur (Morrow, 2008). As experienced nurses and nurse leaders begin to shift towards retirement and away from clinical practice, the need for nurse leaders will be thrust upon the new generation.

Canadian Nursing Students' Association Position

That the Canadian Nursing Students' Association strongly support the need for, and encouragement of, mentorship programs and initiatives aimed at educating nursing students and new graduate nurses on the skills, resources, and opportunities required to develop into successful nurse leaders. Further, that the Canadian Nursing Students' Association continue to credit itself as a resource for future nurse leaders and push for greater recognition from schools of nursing as a resource for leadership development through involvement in the association and its activities.

Relation to Canadian Nursing Schools' Curriculum

Leadership, as a competency, skill, and personal attribute, is a guiding principle in nursing education in Canada. It is outlined in curriculum, stressed in association policy and frameworks, and is emphatically situated throughout the competencies that guide nursing practice. Leadership theories are taught and tested and yet leadership opportunities, such as those granted through involvement with the Canadian Nursing Students Association (CNSA) are not credited or recognized as such.



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Provincial and territorial regulatory bodies such as the College of Nurses of Ontario shape and guide the required knowledge, skills, and competencies required in order to practice within a particular geographical location. Leadership, as a term, is often and clearly referenced in these guiding documents. Through the inclusion of leadership education for nursing students and an emphasis on opportunities in curriculum, nursing students will be better prepared to confront the leadership needs of the nursing landscape that they are entering.

Nursing leadership is the lynchpin in nursing care delivery - whether it be patient safety, future models of care, or research knowledge translation. With an ever changing healthcare horizon, and a potentially crippling loss of nursing experience through generational retirement, it is imperative that schools of nursing begin to prepare nursing students to be effective and visionary nurse leaders (Huston, 2008).

Conclusion

Nursing is never static, always changing, and forever expanding. The new generation of Canadian nurses and nursing students will be faced with challenges and adversity. It is imperative that CNSA continues to support programs and initiatives aimed at educating nursing students and new graduate nurses in order to assist in the development of successful and effective nurse leaders.



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- Also see:
Conference Time Equals Clinical Time, 2002