The Clinical Nurse Educator (CNE) role in an ambulatory care setting comes with unique opportunities for professional growth and autonomy of practice. As the focus in healthcare has shifted from the inpatient to the outpatient setting, the need for professional nurses to champion this transition is evident. Systematic and evidenced-based training in the work setting is paramount to creating and maintaining quality nursing care in this fast-paced domain of healthcare. The benchmark for promoting nurse retention and job satisfaction is to utilize CNE’s to provide an organized orientation program. Ambulatory care nursing across a wide span of outpatient clinics is the definitive venue to benefit from said program.

Between the years of 2010-2012 there were 78 new nurses hired to staff eleven Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) in this network.

Responsibilities of the CNE have expanded to include both primary care and specialty services.

The Clinical Nurse Educator (CNE) role in the outpatient clinic The CNE collaborates with other disciplines and serves as a role model, mentor, preceptor, and consultant. The expectations of the CNE include:

- Development and revision of orientation programs
- Orientation of new nursing staff
- Direct/adjacent Nurse Managers/Preceptors in following a structured orientation program
- Quarterly staff competency reviews
- Provide live and remote educational sessions via Video Teleconferencing (VTC) and Lync Desktop
- Facilitate professional development and encourage staff participation
- Creation of a shared CNE T-drive folder
- Regularly scheduled online and face to face CNE team meetings
- CNE orientation checklist
- Scheduled outpatient clinical leadership meetings.

Developing and revising orientation programs

- Educator duties are divided between Primary Care and Specialty Services Clinics.
- Assignments in the network are divided into Southern and Northern tiers and distributed among the CNE team.
- The team of educators is composed of highly experienced and trained professionals in the fields of surgical services, critical care, and emergency department nursing.
- Role of the CNE in ambulatory care involves:  
  - Developing and revising orientation programs
  - Orientation of new nursing staff
  - Preceptor development and mentoring
  - Serving as a clinical resource

- Planning and coordination meetings were held to organize the implementation of an orientation program.
- To overcome geographical barriers, video teleconferencing (VTC) and internal computer network sharing modalities were used to decrease travel time and increase learning productivity.
- Standardized orientation was provided for the newly hired CNE’s and training validated through use of a Clinical Nurse Educator Orientation Checklist.

- Define the role of the Clinical Nurse Educator in an ambulatory care setting
- Identify and discuss the challenges of implementing an orientation program and meeting continuing education requirements for all nursing staff
- Describe innovative methods used to encourage collegiality among the CNE’s and promote development of a highly functioning team.

- The CLINICAL NURSE role within the outpatient clinic
- Educating preceptors on the new orientation process
- Review clinical performance issues
- Direct/advise Nurse Managers/Preceptors in following a structured orientation program
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- The use of VTC, LYNC shared network desktop with telephone calls proved to be an effective communication and training tool for the CNE team. Using these modalities the team worked cohesively while providing support and training to the nursing staff. Collaborating with the nurse managers allowed the CNE team to revise the nursing orientation program.

- Streamlining the competency folder content list to facilitate compliance with regulatory agencies
- Incorporating multiple individual competencies into the comprehensive Nursing Service competency
- Creating a Training material folder with competency validation tools
- Reformatting the orientation document
- Educating preceptors on the new orientation process
- Revising the orientation binder

- Developing a CNE team in this network of outpatient clinics has been a testament to collaborative efforts of key stakeholders. Creative solutions to overcoming geographic barriers, time constraints, staffing issues, and an annual influx of new hires have been successfully addressed.

- Standardized orientation program has been utilized to provide a smooth transition into a new work environment for the incoming nursing staff over the past three years. Feedback on this program has been positive regarding the support and resources provided. Standardized training has resulted in an enhanced sense of team work and overall sense of belonging. The end point being increased job satisfaction, improved patient outcomes, and decreased turnover rates of nursing staff.

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