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Chapter 1.

The Art of Precepting: An Overview of the Precepting Process

This chapter introduces the ambulatory care Preceptor role in relation to the precepting process; the importance of maintaining competence for both the Preceptor and the Learner; the influence of organizational support and the benefits of being a Preceptor.

Objectives

1. Define precepting process.
2. Discuss the role of the Preceptor in ambulatory care.
3. Explain the role of organizational support for the Preceptor.

The Precepting Process

The precepting process is time intensive and involves the transference of knowledge from one individual to another. The Preceptor translates knowledge into pathways or mechanisms which the Orienteer can understand and apply in the clinical setting. The Preceptor and the Learner relationship is usually a one-to-one relationship.

The Preceptor's role is so complex and essential that it is important to know that every nurse who assumes this role should be trained appropriately. Experience alone does not make a good Preceptor. Due to longevity in a role and experience it becomes an expectation the experienced nurse assumes the role of precepting. This presumption can lead to nurses assuming a role for which they may not be compatible or have the needed competency. Creating a relationship between Learners with a nurse who does not desire to teach can lead to disastrous outcomes for the Learner, the Preceptor, the organization as well as the patient. For this reason, it is beneficial to all parties involved that the Preceptor is provided with a structured educational program that explains the Preceptor's role. The Preceptor's role is so diverse and pivotal in the educational learning plan that it is crucial that there is adequate preparation for the Preceptor role and support as they fulfill the role (Zahner, Tipple, Rather, & Schendzielos, 2009). Organizational support is instrumental in developing the experienced nurse as a Preceptor. Due to the inherent differences in the ambulatory and inpatient care setting these differences should be well explored to help the Preceptor appreciate the uniqueness of the environment in which they work. This education will help them assist the new employee, student, or transferring nurse in learning what they can expect when they enter the new ambulatory care arena.

The Preceptor is an individual who should be well versed in the tools used to assess the adult Learner; be knowledgeable of the learning domains, have strong listening skills and be a good communicator. According to Delfino, Williams, Wegener, and Home (2014), the effective Preceptor is "one who embraces the role of socializer, protector, Educator, and evaluator of the nurse who is making the transition into a new work environment" (p. 122). Preceptors help to connect the dots. They live at the intersections of education and practice. Preceptors tie the past into the present and they help to prepare you for the future. They practice at the point where theoretical learning meets reality and where the

Chapter 5. Role of the Nurse Educator in the Preceptor Program

Collaboration with Nurse Educators is key to a successful preceptor program as they are the experts in applying educational process to create a preceptor program. The Educator identifies educational needs, creates plans, instructs, and evaluates learning and the program. The Nurse Educator provides support to the Preceptor who is on the frontline observing the Orientee and may identify knowledge deficits but may be unsure of how to proceed. Working collaboratively with the Educator allows connection from the theory of education and teaching to the practice of providing to the Orientee. The Orientee gains needed expertise and the Preceptor gains confidence in teaching skills. Without this support the Preceptor may become frustrated and disengaged in the process leaving the new team member to find their own way.

Objectives

1. Describe relevant roles of the Nurse Educator in the preceptor program.
2. Explain the importance of a collaborative relationship between the Preceptor and Nurse Educator.
3. Discuss the role of continual support of the Preceptor in building and maintaining a strong program.

Practice and Learning Environment

The Nurse Educator assists to create an environment of learning (ANA/National Nursing Staff Development Organization [NNSDO], 2010). They support nursing staff in developing and maintaining knowledge and competence to provide quality patient care. Avillion (2005) defines staff development as “the process of providing continuing education and training for people working in organizations that specialize in healthcare products and services” (p. 1). Nursing Professional Development: Scope and Standards of Practice identify continuing education as “systematic professional learning experiences designed to augment the knowledge, skills and attitudes of nurses” (ANA/NNSDO, 2010, p. 43). The roles of the Nurse Educator utilized in working with Preceptors include being an Educator, consultant, leader, communicator, and advisor/mentor.

Educator

Nurse Educators facilitate learning by assessing learning needs, developing education, teaching nurses, and evaluating the outcomes of the education. The organization’s mission, vision and values support the practice arena and are used to guide enculturation of the employee into the organization. Orientation programs provide that focus on policies, procedures, standards of care, guidelines, and changes within the health care environment. Education is provided through integration of educational theories such as adult learning theory, learning style inventories, personality type assessments, and