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Title

Increasing the number of registered nurses with specialty certification

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Background

Research studies have shown positive impacts on patient and staff satisfaction with increased percentage of certified nurses. Specifically, patient satisfaction increases by 3.5x with 30% of nurses being certified (Halm 2021). In addition, an increased number of nurses with specialty certifications has also correlated with increased workplace empowerment and job satisfaction (Krapohl 2010). East 5 has 27 staff nurses, in which 6 nurses (22%) currently have a specialty certification.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to increase the number of East 5 nursing staff with a specialty certification to 7 nurses (26%) within one year.

OPPORTUNITY	
1. What is the problem or gap? Increase the number of specialty certified nurses	
Target: 26%	FY2021
Actual: 22%	
Gap: 4%	
	Goal: 7 specialty certified RNs
	Current: 6 specialty certified RNs
	Gap: 1 RN to earn specialty certification

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Methods

The Unit Based Practice Council includes 5 staff nurses (one of which is an AN2, one is a CN3, and 3 are CN2s), nurse manager, and the quality and safety champion. The Unit Based Practice Council engaged in brain storming sessions, surveyed the staff, and utilized an A3 to: (1) determine the unit's goal with regard to specialty certification; (2) identify and analyze the barriers surrounding the staff's lack of motivation to obtain certification; (3) identify actions and interventions to overcome staff's lack of motivation to obtain specialty certification.

In addition, the Unit Based Practice Council has planned multiple study group sessions focused on the Stroke Certified Registered Nurse (SCRN) exam that are open for all nursing staff to attend. So far, one study group session has been implemented in January, and there are dates planned for the months of February and March. Due to the pandemic, the study session was held virtually via WebEx. Each study group session consists of: (1) a PowerPoint lecture to review the subject material; (2) practice exam questions related to the study material; and (3) a group discussion.

Results

The Unit Based Practice Council utilized an A3 project template and identified barriers including: (1) the cost of the examination fee; (2) lack of motivation to study and sit for the exam; (3) fear of failure; and (4) staff did not want to study alone and were interested in attending study groups. The Unit Based Practice Council has planned and implemented study group sessions that are open to all of the nursing staff. One study group session has been held so far. Unfortunately, there were no additional staff members that chose to attend the study session, only the five members of the Unit Based Practice Council attended. To date, there have not been any nurses that have taken the SCRN exam. Therefore, the number of specialty certified nurses is unchanged.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, we were not able to achieve our goal for this project. There continues to be 6 nurses (22%) that currently have a specialty certification. East 5 nursing staff were introduced to Fail Safe and Success Pays programs to assist in the reimbursement of the examination fee and address their fear of failure. Three study groups were scheduled, all of which to take place virtually via WebEx due to the current pandemic. Multiple study materials were gathered, including test prep books, sample test questions, and PowerPoint presentations for the group study sessions. Unfortunately, despite all of the announcements and these efforts, so far there has not been any turnout for the study group. The first study group was done in January and only the members of the Unit Based Practice Council attended. There are future monthly study group sessions planned for February and March, with hopes that more staff members will attend.

Implications

Some limitations to the project that have been identified include scheduling difficulty and not being able to meet in person. Due to each nurse having a different work schedule and other personal obligations (i.e., child care, distance learning, and caring for older family members), it is difficult to find dates for the study group sessions that work for everyone. Also, not being able to meet in person is a limitation, due to the fact that many people prefer to have an in-person study group to feel more motivated to attend the study group and to study for the exam.

Further research is needed to find ways to motivate staff nurses not only to attend the virtual study group sessions, but also to sit for the exam. Some future interventions for next year will include educating the staff on the Agnes Marshall Walker Foundation grant, which is a great opportunity for providing financial assistance for the exam fee. Also, we plan to work with CPPN to determine if the study sessions could provide the nurses CEUs, which may help to motivate staff to attend. We will also reach out to the Neurosurgical ICU to determine if they have staff interest in obtaining the SCRN and if they would like to collaborate with planning the study group sessions.

References

- Krapohl, G, Maojlovich, M., Redman, R. & Zhang, L. *Nursing specialty certification and nursing-sensitive patient outcomes in the intensive care unit* (2010), *American Journal of Critical Care*, 19 (6) 490-498.
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