The Impact of the Clinical Ladder on Nurse Retention Rates at Lehigh Valley Health Network

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**Background**

- The term “Nurse Retention” is used to describe the act of keeping nurses at the organization in which they are currently employed.
- “Nurse Turnover” occurs when a nurse chooses to leave their current organization.
- The Clinical Ladder program was first introduced in the 1970’s as a way to recognize and reward exceptional nurses.
- The Clinical Ladder aims to increase nurse retention while decreasing nurse turnover by means of financial compensation, recognition, and the encouragement of professional development.
- The Clinical Ladder can be administered in the form of a survey or peer/manager evaluations.

**Objectives:**
To observe the overall impact of the Clinical Ladder program on nurse retention at LVHN while aiding in improving the program as a whole.

**Methods**

- Create a questionnaire using REDCap that inquires about the impact of the Clinical Ladder at LVHN in FY18.
- Distribute the survey to nurses recognized by last year’s Clinical Ladder.
- Recognized nurses who have left the network will not be contacted.
- Work with current nursing staff on the PRIME Committee in regards to improving the current Clinical Ladder program.
- Aid in creating the PRIME Scorecard (new Clinical Ladder survey) using REDCap.

**Results**

- The registered nurse retention rate based on FY18’s data was 98%.
- 107 nurses responded to the REDCap survey (40% response rate).
- 61% of participants felt the Clinical Ladder program adequately recognized them for their engagement in their unit.
- 65% of participants felt the Clinical Ladder program adequately recognized them for their personal professional development.
- 66% of participants felt the Clinical Ladder program somewhat, if not definitely, motivated them to become more engaged at LVHN.
- 59% of participants felt that being recognized by the Clinical Ladder program did NOT change their intent to remain at LVHN for the next year.

**Conclusions/Future Recommendations**

- Ways to improve the Clinical Ladder as gathered from nurse questionnaire question 6 (63 total responses):
  - Hourly compensation/ change in compensation (23 responses or 27%)
  - Inclusion of activities/departments not currently recognized in the program (26 responses or 31%) (i.e. community service, outside volunteer work)
  - Make application process more user-friendly (22 responses or 26%)

- Other ways to improve retention:
  - Increased nurse involvement in decision making
  - Re-designing nurse work spaces
  - Improving culture and positive atmosphere in the organization
  - Flexibility in work schedule

**References**