Project LeaRN: Clinical Nurses Engaging in Scholarly Visits to Transform Practice in Their Own Setting (poster)

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What Project LeaRN Has Meant to Me

By Karen Jones, BSN, RN, CCNR

After graduating with my bachelor’s degree in nursing, I was tired by Lehigh Valley Hospital (LVH) as a clinical nurse on a medical-surgical orthopedic trauma unit. After 4 years, I began my critical care experience on the open heart unit, where I remained 26 years later. About 4 years ago, my unit initiated two new services: left ventricular assist device (LVAD) and intracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO).

These services were ideal for our first Project LeaRN experience. I was thrilled to be chosen as a participant. The other participant works on the transitional open heart unit. From the start, we were involved in planning our experience. We investigated multiple hospitals, but chose the Texas Heart Institute (THI) in Houston because of its well-established programs for mechanical heart devices—and because our LVAD surgeon trained there. THI staff were extremely receptive and excited to mentor us.

Our THI visit involved 2 travel days and 3 full days of intensive care delivery. We identified our general visit objectives and multiple specific objectives and questions related to various skill competencies. Before our visit, we conveyed these objectives to the THI point person. We got answers not only to our identified questions but also to many more, including some we couldn’t have anticipated. One of our goals was to identify a mentor with whom to communicate during initiation and continued development of our LVAD and ECMO programs. As it turned out, we gained many mentors, not just one.

Our visit was no vacation. We spent 3 long days observing patient care in this amazing place. Even after we returned to LVH, our Project LeaRN experience was for only weeks. We were required to complete a post-trip report template, comparing the original trip objectives to our trip activities, learnings, and take-home documents. Most important was the template’s last column—the “So what”—actions taken at LVH based on our Project LeaRN experiences. Not only did Project LeaRN allow me to gain significant clinical knowledge, but it also fostered my formal presentation skills.

My travel colleague and I prepared a presentation, which we offered to our unit colleagues and, separately, to our chief nursing officer and senior nursing leadership team. Also, we became members of the LVH ECMO and LVAD committees and faculty members for our LVAD and ECMO classes.

When I started working on the open heart unit 24 years ago, people told me I’d quickly grow bored there because it would be the “same old thing.” Well, I’ve never been bored! Who could have predicted back then the new surgical techniques and technologies, such as ECMO and LVAD, that now exist? Or that I’d get the chance to travel from Pennsylvania to Texas for a 3-day learning experience at a world-renowned center of excellence? Or that I’d be able to offer a formal presentation about my experience to more than 750 nurses at the ANCC National Magnet Conference? Most of all, who could have predicted that after 26 years, my passion for nursing would be greater than ever?

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Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, PA

Project LeaRN Details

Innovation

• Innovations in nursing are supported, encouraged, and implemented in the organization.

Project LeaRN

Enables experienced nurses to make scholarly visits to other health facilities to observe and learn best practices

Funding

The Carl R. & Anne C. Anderson Trust

Evidence

Practice-based sabbaticals have succeeded from a cost-benefit perspective in business, industry, and academia. Though rare in the acute hospital setting, such sabbaticals are intended to boost retention, revitalization, and reward; promote loyalty and organizational commitment; decrease burnout; and enhance employee productivity and satisfaction.

Selection of Experiences

Aligned with patient care priorities

Participants

Clinical nurses with a minimum of 5 years seniority

Implications

Aligns with several Magnet Recognition Program sources of evidence:

• Transformational leaders and clinical nurses pursue resources that support nursing and organizational goals.
• Clinical nurses gain new knowledge by evaluating and incorporating evidence into their practice.
• Innovations in nursing are supported, encouraged, and implemented in the organization.

Selected References


Pediatric Burn Care Delivery Model

Arizona Burn Center at Maricopa Medical Center, Phoenix, AZ

A new care delivery model that integrates the burn care and pediatric specialties to assure consistent best practice standards of care

Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO) and left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD)

Implementation of ECMO and LVAD programs; ECMO volumes exceed projected numbers and outcomes outperform Extracorporeal Life Support Organization benchmarks

Ceasarean Section surgeries

Ceasarean Section surgeries in accordance with American operating Registered Nurses (ACRN) standards

Mobile Communications

University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, Iowa, IA

In process—considering use of smartphone technology in clinical areas

Reliable and Variable Rounder Care Delivery Model

University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA

New care delivery model for ancillary personnel

Pressure Ulcer Reduction

Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center, Richmond, VA

Involvement of unit Skin Champions in monthly prevalence audits

Target Zero Program (Error Prevention, Zero Harm)

Colorado Children’s Hospital, Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, Aurora, CO

Education of “All Teach, All Learn” approach

LVH Results

Resource of skin care and pressure ulcer prevention education for Skin Champions

Unit weekly skin safety huddles with Certified Wound, Ostomy, Continence Nurses (CWOCN) and staff

Unit weekly skin safety huddles with Certified Wound, Ostomy, Continence Nurses (CWOCN) and staff

New “Hospital Acquired Conditions” group auditing tool

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