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Frontline Nurse Leader Orientation Programs: A Review of Literature

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Title/Author Biography Page

Title: Frontline Nurse Leader Orientation Programs: A Review of Literature

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Abstract

Aim This manuscript aims to synthesize the literature on the skills and knowledge needed by frontline nurse leaders and effective orientation or training programs developed to meet those needs.

Background Frontline nurse leaders are often promoted to positions of leadership due to their strong clinical skills; they often do not receive formal training.

Evaluation A literature search was conducted to identify and critically appraise journal articles that discuss orientation and training programs offered to frontline nurse leaders.

Key Issues The literature review revealed that frontline nurse leaders require a variety of skills and knowledge to be successful. Orientation and training programs developed to meet the needs of these frontline nurse leaders were summarized. Successfully implemented programs have covered a wide range of topics, deemed necessary for frontline nurse leaders, including addressing staff shortcoming, daily operations, and leadership style.

Conclusion Studies included in this review defined the essential aspects of how frontline nurse leaders are prepared for their new role. A wide variety of topics were suggested by frontline nurse leaders themselves: communication, finance, human resource, conflict resolution, scheduling, and management.

Implications for nursing leadership Formal preparation of frontline leaders is often overlooked and leads to unnecessary turnover. Creating an evidence-based orientation program followed by an ongoing training program for new frontline nurse leaders is critical. This training should be based on a needs assessment that addresses the specific needs of frontline nurse managers.

Keywords: assistant nurse manager, nurse manager, frontline leaders, orientation, training

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Introduction

As a nurse leader, have you ever wondered why there is a high rate of turnover of frontline nurse leaders? One of the reasons is that these nurse leaders are tasked with having skill sets that include leadership, prioritization, delegation, communication, emotional intelligence, technology, as well as understanding budget and finance (Dyess, Sherman, Pratt & Chiang-Hanisko, 2016). Unfortunately, new nurse leaders often lack these skills. Many frontline nurse leaders receive their first management position because of their strong clinical skills, and often lack formal leadership preparation (Fennimore & Wolf, 2011). Although this may be the way we have always done things, it is no longer prudent for a novice frontline nurse leader to assume a leadership role with minimal preparation (Watkins et al., 2014). The purpose of this review of literature is to find answers to these questions: What do new frontline nurse leaders need to learn during orientation and training? What effective training or orientation programs have been developed for frontline nurse leaders?

Background and Significance

While many frontline nurse leaders are promoted to positions of leadership based on their exceptional clinical practice, formal preparation is often overlooked (Jennings, Scalzi, Rodgers, & Keane, 2007). Many organizations use the “learn as you go” or “in the trenches” experience method, which leads to high turn over rates and ineffective leadership due to inconsistent leadership (Swearingen, 2009).

The economic impact of high nurse leader turnover rates can be costly. It costs roughly \$90,000 to \$200,00 annually to replace a nurse manager (Smith, 2019). High leadership turnover rates warrant organizations to evaluate workplace engagement as well as leadership training and development. Compared to other organizations, healthcare organizations have the highest

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turnover rates, especially in frontline leaders such as charge nurses, assistant nurse managers, and nurse managers (Bernthal, 2004).

Seeking a solution to leadership turnover has become the focus of many healthcare organizations; many healthcare systems have invested in outside consultants who focus on general leadership skills, crucial conversations, and emotional intelligence. Unfortunately, these recommendations do not always address the specific responsibilities outlined in the job description or the specific role profile of frontline nurse leaders. The most desired outcome of any leadership training is increased knowledge, and empowerment of the frontline leader (Lacross, Hall, & Boerger, 2019). What these generalized programs often fail to do is address the specific needs of these frontline leaders.

Methods

A literature search was conducted to identify articles that addressed frontline nurse leader orientation or training programs and the content taught in those programs. The initial search included the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, PubMed, and OVID. Keywords utilized in database searches were: assistant nurse manager, frontline leader, nurse manager, orientation, and training. The search resulted in a combined total of 24,000 articles, and many were not related to the topic. The search was narrowed to articles that were related to nurse manager leadership or management development through orientation, residency, or training programs and yield 147 articles. The study or project must have occurred in an acute care facility and included front line leaders (assistant nurse managers, nurse managers). There was no limitation on the year of publication of the articles. Ten articles met the inclusion criteria (Appendix A), with one study published in the late 1990s, and the other nine published between 2002 and 2019. These articles

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were critically appraised with the Johns Hopkins Research and Nonresearch Evidence Appraisal Tools (Dang & Dearholt, 2018). The results of these appraisals for research evidence ranged from level I to level III and low to high quality. The nonresearch evidence ranged from level IV to level V and low to high quality.

Findings

Frontline nurse leaders are often unprepared. Cadmus and Johansen (2012) conducted a needs assessment of first-line nurse managers via a descriptive exploratory survey to create a first-line nurse manager leadership residency, which included 485 first-line nurse managers. The assessment concluded that first-line nurse managers are underprepared for positions of leadership.

Swearingen (2009) reported that formal training and orientation programs are often absent, and new nurse leaders are often expected to learn by trial and error. Millennial nurse managers describe learning as you go model as a new nurse manager. These nurse leaders described trying to manage role expectations as “being lucky,” struggling with “missing pieces,” and “just getting by” (Saifman & Sherman, 2019).

Skills and Knowledge Needed by Frontline Nurse Leaders. A qualitative study was conducted by Sullivan, Bretschneider, and McCausland (2003) to identify a nurse manager's perspective on leadership development needs. The needs of 94 new nurse managers were identified. These leadership development needs included communication skills, basic conflict resolution skills, scheduling, payroll, performance evaluation, and basic managerial skills. The researchers concluded that nurse managers at all levels have educational and developmental needs.

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Sherman and Bishop (2007) conducted face-to-face interviews with 120 frontline nurse leaders to identify the leadership skills and competencies a nurse manager needs. The interview consisted of twenty-six, open-ended questions. The authors concluded that frontline nurse leaders need six key competencies: personal mastery, interpersonal effectiveness, human resource management, financial management, system thinking, and caring.

A qualitative interpretive study conducted by Saifman and Sherman (2019) identified the educational needs of millennial nurse managers in the hospital setting who were in their first nurse manager position. The study included twenty-five participants who identified challenges in role expectations, managing change, finance, budget, and influencing staff. Saifman and Sherman concluded that there is a need for competent nurse leaders, and as members of the healthcare industry, we need to continue to identify and meet the needs of the nurse manager.

Swearingen (2009) states that leadership development is vital to nursing, and nursing leadership; nurse leaders should be asked what they think they need to learn, and nurse executives should be asked what they expect nurse leaders to know. With this base information, a curriculum can be created for nurse leaders at all levels. Swearingen (2009) identified nurse leaders as needing education on organizational culture (mission, vision, and values), conflict management, delegation, communication, staff assignments, and patient satisfaction as core skills. As nurse leaders develop and grow advanced communication, team building, change management, and advanced finance and budgeting are curricula needed to broaden leadership skills (Swearingen, 2009).

Frontline nurse leader orientation and training programs. Conley, Branowicki, and Hanley (2007) presented an orientation program for nurse managers that consisted of general classes, nurse manager competencies, and precepting by the manager's supervisor. The

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orientation program included a nurse manager resource manual that provided information on finance, administrations, management, performance improvement, and human resources. The orientation was completed by five new nurse managers who reported that the program provided the information they needed and helped get them “up to speed” (Conley, Branowicki, & Hanley, 2007).

Lacross, Hall, and Boerger (2019) conducted a quasi-experimental and correlational design method study that resulted in increased leadership behavior over time of ten participants who completed a ninety-day succession planning program. The succession planning program included didactic and experimental sessions that focused on the organizations' mission and vision, AONE nurse manager competencies, leadership principles, and strategic planning for the organization.

Goktepe et al. (2018) conducted a needs assessment of nurse managers' knowledge and skills. The results of this need assessment were used to create objectives for a nurse manager orientation program that consisted of face-to-face training, group work, team-based learning, and role-playing. Twenty nurse managers attended this orientation program. Participants' post-training competency score was significantly higher than pre-training scores (Goktepe et al., 2018).

Watkins et al. (2014) conducted a nurse residency program for new nurse managers that resulted in succession planning for future leaders, leadership development, as well as competent and confident nurse managers. The authors concluded that relevant knowledge that can be immediately applied is necessary to develop nurse managers.

Patrician, Prapanjaroensin, Dawson, White-Williams, and Miltner (2018) conducted a facilitated workshop focusing on the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) nurse

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manager skills inventory (NMSI) competency, as well as leadership and management development. The workshop had ninety-nine attendees; seventeen of the attendees completed the pretest and posttest that was a nurse manager skills inventory. The authors concluded that nurse leaders could benefit from targeted activities that address financial management, relationship management, and human resources leadership skills.

Limitations

The greatest challenge in reviewing the literature was the small amount of research on the topic. Although there are thousands of articles related to frontline nurse leaders, there are few that discuss what skills and knowledge needed by frontline nurse leaders to be successful. Further, there was no single orientation, training, succession plan, or residency that was replicated; thus, each program was identified as successful for its population of nurse leaders.

Summary

After reviewing the literature about frontline leaders, the evidence suggests that nurse leaders need a wide range of knowledge and skills to be successful in their roles. Common topics identified included: finance, communication, HR management, and leadership development are necessary education for new frontline nurse leaders.

Both new and seasoned nurse leaders need to be involved in the educational development of frontline nurse leaders. The literature on frontline nurse leader orientation programs demonstrates that nurse leaders at all levels need education, training, and should be included in education planning

It is the responsibility of current nurse leaders to help develop future frontline nurse leaders and to help decrease their turnover rates. Leadership development of frontline nurse leaders takes time. Frontline nurse leaders can be retained through leadership development that is

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specific to their job role. Orientation programs followed by ongoing training programs that incorporate the results of a needs assessment of frontline nurse leaders into an evidence-based curriculum are more likely to be successful.

Source of funding

None

Ethical Approval

IRB approval was not required for this paper.

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Appendix A- Evidence Table

<i>Citation</i>	<i>Purpose of Study</i>	<i>Conceptual Framework</i>	<i>Design/Method</i>	<i>Sample/Setting</i>	<i>Variables Studied and their Definitions</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Data Analysis</i>	<i>Study Findings</i>
<i>Cadmus, E., & Johansen, M. L. (2012). The time is now: Developing a nurse manager residency Program. Nursing Management, 43(10), 18–24. doi: 10.1097/01.nu ma.0000419448 .52255.6c</i>	Explore the need for the development of an FLNM program for new leaders	Quality of care	a descriptive, exploratory survey	senior nurse leaders from 48 agencies across New Jersey; 485 first-line nurse managers	IV: first-line nurse manager education DV: FLNM residency program <2yrs experience	response by the organization, average FTE's for each FLNM, descriptive characteristics	most FLNM have a BSN and are underprepared for leadership positions	An FLNM nurse residency program is needed for leaders with < 2 years' experience
<i>Conley, S. B., Branowicki, P., & Hanley, D. (2007). Nursing leadership orientation. JONA: The Journal of Nursing Administration, 37(11), 491–498. doi: 10.1097/01.nna .0000295612. 48065.ff</i>	conduct a needs assessment of 10 nurse managers	none identified	survey	Ten nurse managers hired within five years	IV: Current orientation program DV: usefulness of information to the nurse manager	how the information taught translated to unit-specific needs	new nurse manager orientation program was successful based on positive feedback	nurse manager was satisfied with the information taught; the program will be updated as needed

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<p><i>Goktepe, N., Turkmen, E., Badhir, A., Hayta, O., Yakar, H. K., & Buyukgonenc, L. A. (2018). Development of managerial competencies for first-level nurse managers in Turkey. International Journal of Caring Sciences, 11(2), 1096–1103. Retrieved from http://www.internationaljournalofcaringsciences.org/docs/52_goktepe_origin_al_10_2.pdf</i></p>	<p>evaluate the contribution of the specially developed “Nurse Manager DevelopmentT he program” to the managerial and leadership competencies of first-level nurse managers.</p>	<p>Quality of care</p>	<p>A quasi-experimental study using pre and post-test</p>	<p>20 first-level nurse managers who work in a private hospital</p>	<p>IV: Nurse manager development program DV: needs assessment and education development</p>	<p>a change in management skills and competency; a change in level of leadership and management</p>	<p>SPSS analysis using Wilcoxon test to compare pre and post-test results</p>	<p>significant differences were found between nurse managers’ pre- and post-training test score averages as well as between their pre and post-training managerial competency self-assessment score averages.</p>
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<p><i>Lacross, E., Hall, N., & Boerger, J. A. (2019). Nurse manager succession planning: Evaluating a Pilot program's effect on self-perception. JONA: The Journal of Nursing Administration, 49(6), 331–335. doi: 10.1097/nna.0000000000000761</i></p>	<p>successful nurse manager succession planning</p>	<p>none identified</p>	<p>Quasi-experimental and correlational design method study</p>	<p>12 nurses from 10 hospital locations to be prepared for the NM role in a not for profit magnet healthcare system</p>	<p>IV: Pilot study DV: an increase in leadership behaviors based on self-assessment</p>	<p>personal readiness, the effectiveness of the program, the recommendation of the program</p>	<p>nurse manager readiness questionnaire</p>	<p>Statistically significant increases were observed in participants' perceptions of their own readiness to enter NM roles and also in their demonstration of leadership behaviors.</p>
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<p><i>Patrician, P. A., Prapanjaroensin, A., Dawson, M., White-Williams, C., & Miltner, R. S. (2018). Mapping and sustaining leadership development. JONA: The Journal of Nursing Administration, 48(11), 567–573. doi: 10.1097/nna.0000000000000681</i></p>	<p>evaluate the effectiveness of an NM workshop</p>	<p>none identified</p>	<p>pretest/posttest</p>	<p>99 individuals from 12 hospitals in the Birmingham region</p>	<p>IV: 2 days facilitate workshop focusing on AONE Competencies DV: Leadership and management development</p>	<p>81 item inventory of self-perceived skills</p>	<p>17 leaders (NM & ANM) completed pretest and posttest; Posttest scores were higher than pretest scores by 1.3 to 2.3 on a 9-point scale</p>	<p>posttest score was statistically significantly higher than pretest scores; nurse leaders can benefit from targeted learning activities</p>
<p><i>Saifman, H., & Sherman, R. O. (2019). The experience of being a millennial nurse Manager. JONA: The Journal of Nursing Administration, 49(7/8), 366–371. doi: 10.1097/nna.0000000000000769</i></p>	<p>explore the experiences of millennial nurse managers</p>	<p>none identified</p>	<p>a qualitative interpretative phenomenological study</p>	<p>25 Millennial nurse managers, in a hospital setting, with a minimum of 1-year experience</p>	<p>IV: Current orientation program DV: usefulness of information to the nurse manager</p>	<p>personal readiness</p>	<p>seven themes identified from the interviews</p>	<p>as a healthcare industry, we need to identify and meet the needs of nurse leaders</p>

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<p><i>Sherman, R. O., & Bishop, M. (2007). Development of a leadership competency model. The Journal of Nursing Administration, 37(2), 85–94.</i></p>	<p>explore the viewpoint of 120 nurse managers</p>	<p>nursing leadership competency</p>	<p>grounded theory methodology</p>	<p>120 nurse manager throughout southern Florida & the treasure coast of Florida; two groups- 1 with > 2 years' experience and 1 with <2 years' experience</p>	<p>IV: Current orientation program DV: usefulness of information to the nurse manager</p>	<p>demographics of experienced and inexperienced managers</p>	<p>six competency categories emerged</p>	<p>educational programs should use research findings to develop curriculums</p>
<p><i>Sullivan, J., Bretschneider, J., & Mccausland, M. P. (2003). Designing a leadership development Program for nurse managers: An evidence-based approach. JONA: The Journal of Nursing Administration, 33(10), 544–549. doi: 10.1097/00005110-200310000-00010</i></p>	<p>investigate leadership development needs</p>	<p>none identified</p>	<p>a qualitative study</p>	<p>94 managers from all levels of experience</p>	<p>IV: Current orientation program DV: usefulness of information to the nurse manager</p>	<p>methods used in meeting Lincoln and Guba's trustworthiness criteria</p>	<p>Verbatim quotes supported four focus groups topics</p>	<p>managers at all levels have educational and developmental needs</p>

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<p><i>Swearingen, S. (2009). A journey to leadership: Designing a nursing leadership development Program. The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, 40(3), 107–112. doi: 10.3928/00220124-20090301-02</i></p>	<p>to develop nursing leaders to improve patient outcomes, staff satisfaction, fiscal status, & organizational success</p>	<p>Quality of care</p>	<p>survey</p>	<p>not identified</p>	<p>IV: nursing leadership development program DV: experience and job function</p>	<p>staff satisfaction and patient outcomes</p>	<p>There are five levels of education for leaders based on experience and job function</p>	<p>leadership development is a slow process that takes time to build and implement</p>
<p><i>Watkins, A., Wagner, J., Martin, C., Grant, B., Maule, K., Resh, K., ... Thompson, E. J. (2014). Nurse manager residency program. Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing, 33(3), 121–128. doi: 10.1097/dcc.000000000000036</i></p>	<p>to ensure succession planning for nurse managers</p>	<p>none identified</p>	<p>observational study</p>	<p>12 nurses interested in leadership</p>	<p>IV: Nurse manager residency program DV: Succession planning</p>	<p>a pool of future nurse managers</p>	<p>12 residents completed the program; 10 remained in the NM position</p>	<p>the knowledge that is relevant and can be immediately applied is needed</p>