Improving Patient Care and the Bottom Line

Nursing employers can meet the needs of patients and healthcare organizations by improving targeted competencies for nurses through a tailored approach to higher education.
SUMMARY

In its important 2010 report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommended that health care organizations increase the proportion of nurses with BSN degrees or higher to 80% by 2020.¹

In a follow-up to this report, a comprehensive study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation² has shown that higher proportions of BSN-educated nurses were associated with lower patient mortality, lower odds of readmission, shorter lengths of stay, and significant cost savings.

As the health care environment grows increasingly complex, organizations are now tasked with educating their current RN workforce to meet the IOM’s recommendations. Capella University has responded to this need with a tailored nurse development program, *Nursing Track 80/20*.

Capella nursing programs are CCNE³ accredited and aligned with the ANCC Magnet Model Components. Focused on the competencies that drive effective thinking and behaviors, *Nursing Track 80/20* can improve patient outcomes and optimize employer investments.
CHALLENGE

Mounting evidence shows that meeting the IOM’s recommended threshold of BSN-educated nurses can improve outcomes for patients as well as health care organizations. Employers of RNs are seeking a cost effective, streamlined BSN program that will improve the competency of their current workforce, while driving up the proportion of BSN-educated nurses on staff.

SOLUTION

To successfully meet this challenge, employers need a BSN program that is CCNE-accredited, professionally aligned, and tailored to improve identified competency areas. Additionally, a successful program must be flexible enough to fit into the busy RN’s life, and designed to be immediately applicable for true on-the-job impact.

RESULTS

Capella University, an online provider of nursing programs that are both CCNE-accredited and aligned with the ANCC Magnet Model Components, has responded to this challenge with Nursing Track 80/20. This exclusive, nurse development program allows employers to tailor the program to meet their organizations’ unique nurse development goals and support their current workforce with exclusive partner-only benefits and resources.
THE CHALLENGE

With the release of its report, The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health, The Institute of Medicine (IOM) presented a significant challenge to nursing employers: increase the proportion of nurses with BSN degrees or higher to 80% by 2020.

A recent formal study, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Interdisciplinary Nursing Quality Research Initiative (INQRI) has provided an in-depth economic evaluation as well as a thorough analysis of this model’s impact on patient care.

The study, Economic Evaluation of the 80% Baccalaureate Nurse Workforce Recommendation: A Patient-level Analysis, published in Medical Care, “uses a unique dataset that recorded the actual contact between patients and nurses to create a variable that measures, at the individual patient level, the proportion of BSN nurses who provide direct nursing care to each patient.”

The analysis, which focused on two key areas, found that “increasing the BSN proportion to ≥ 80% has the potential to improve patient outcomes and reduce costs.”

PATIENT OUTCOMES

• The study found that there was an “inverse association between the continuous BSN proportion and the odds of in-hospital mortality. Adjusted for patient control variables and fixed effects, a 10% increase in the proportion of BSN-educated care was associated with a 10.9% reduction in the odds of mortality, OR=0.891 (P<0.01).”

• “There was a strong association between the proportion of care received from BSN-educated nurses and improved patient outcomes of mortality, readmission, and length of stay (LOS).”

COSTS

• The research team indicated “increasing the proportion of BSN-prepared nurses caring for each patient to 80 percent or more would reduce annual readmissions by roughly 248 days, reducing costs by $5,653,022.97 annually.”

• “The evidence that supports a business case for a BSN-prepared nursing staff is robust and continues to strengthen, further justifying hiring and education policies that favor BSN-educated nurses.”

Olga Yakusheva, PhD, associate professor of nursing at the University of Michigan School of Nursing and one of the lead researchers, sums up the study’s findings:

“The real contribution of this study is that when we looked at patients in the same hospital, who were hospitalized on the same unit with the same diagnosis, patients who received more than 80 percent of nursing care from BSN-educated nurses tended to do better—despite often being sicker at the time of admission. These patients tended to spend less time in the hospital, fewer of them had to go back to the hospital after discharge and fewer of them died.”
THE SOLUTION

In order to achieve the IOM’s recommended BSN-educated nurse threshold of 80% and realize the corresponding improved patient outcomes and cost savings, Dr. Yakusheva offers the following suggestion:

“This makes you think really, how can we give all of our patients an equal opportunity to receive the high-quality care they deserve? The answer is, or at least seems to be, by investing in nurse education. And our study shows that these investments can also have real costs-saving effects in the long term.”

THE RIGHT INVESTMENT

Health care organizations with a commitment to meeting this challenge may be best served by a partnership with an accredited university that can not only meet the growing demands of the nursing field, but also address the specific and unique needs of each organization.

Components of a successful educational partnership include:

• Accredited, professionally aligned degree programs—including RN-BSN, MSN, and DNP degrees—for registered nurses to continue their education

• Tailored to improve targeted competencies

• Flexible and convenient for working professionals

• Designed to provide immediate on-the-job impact
THE RESULTS

Capella University has responded to the challenge of meeting the IOM’s recommendation with Nursing Track 80/20, an exclusive program designed to assist health care employers as they strive to grow their BSN-educated nursing staff. This program allows employers to optimize their return on investment and save on recruitment and training by developing their existing workforce in a way that meets their specific organizational needs.

PROGRAM FEATURES

- CCNE-accredited programs\textsuperscript{12} that are mapped to the ANCC Magnet Model Components\textsuperscript{13}
- Streamlined RN-to-BSN pathway that builds on what registered nurses already know
- Additional nurse development programs, including RN-BSN/MSN pathway, MSN, DNP and the DNP pathway
- Tailored programs aligned to deliver key competencies for immediate, on-the-job impact
- Speed to competency accelerated through authentic assessments and state-of-the-art simulations based on applicable workplace experience
- Exclusive, partner-only benefits and resources such as tuition discounts, employee engagement support, educational webinars, and continuing education credit opportunities
- Extensive student support services in academics, financial aid, writing, and more
- A Capella-supported community of nurses, ensuring access to resources needed for degree completion
ABOUT CAPELLA
Capella University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.

The BSN, MSN and DNP degree at Capella University are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 530, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 887-6791 http://www.aacn.nche.edu/ccne-accreditation. The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) is a nationally recognized accreditation agency approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education. The Commission ensures the quality and integrity of baccalaureate, graduate, and residency programs in nursing.

COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION
Capella programs are focused on the critical skills, knowledge, theories, and abilities required for mastery in the field. To meet the demands of an evolving system of health and the changing needs of patients, the university’s nursing programs are mapped to relevant academic and professional standards.

EXCEPTIONAL FACULTY
Every member of Capella’s nursing faculty has a doctoral degree combined with leadership experience, and a background in frontline nursing. The faculty is dedicated to supporting nurses as they develop new skills and knowledge to prepare for challenging and rewarding career opportunities.
Capella University offers accredited health care and nursing degrees at the bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral level. Capella’s health care degree programs are competency based, aligned to professional standards such as the IHI Triple Aim Initiative and NCHL Healthcare Leadership Competencies, and recognized by employers for on-the-job impact. Capella offers FlexPath, a new self-paced learning option that allows students to develop the same skills as they would through Capella’s traditional programs, but in a more flexible way.