Evaluation of a Clinical Ladder Program for an Academic Medical Center

Annette Sy, DNP, RN, NE-BC, Jon Christensen, PhD, RN, and Paula, Vuchovich, PhD, RN, PMHCNS-BC

Background
CLPs were designed to enhance professional development, provide a reward system, promote quality nursing practice and improve satisfaction among nurses and patients.

The Medical Center implemented its CLP with the purpose of retaining talented nurses at the bedside.

Problem Statement
In the first year of implementation only 15% of eligible nurses successfully completed an application.

Purpose
The objective was to performed a program evaluation, on the initial clinical ladder program, to determine nursing barriers to application.

Methods
A mixed methods approach was employed for this project. Quantitative data was gathered and analyzed using a Likert-style questionnaire. Qualitative data was gathered using a short-answer response section on the same questionnaire. Sample population was all CLP eligible RN’s.

Findings
Perceived barriers to the CLP for nurses educated within or outside the United States (N=192-193).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Education Setting</th>
<th>Within United States</th>
<th>Outside United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of awareness</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient monetary reward</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time to apply</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
<td>86.8%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time &amp; commitment to succeed</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
<td>86.8%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other barriers</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Conducted for Chi-square tests of independence

Interventions
1. The clinical ladder committee hosted mentoring sessions for nurses on application requirements along with revising and clarifying admission documents. Paid time was provided for portfolio completion.

2. Training sessions were given to all committee members on scoring criteria.

3. The clinical ladder committee hosted a workshop for nursing leadership explaining application process and their role in mentoring and supporting eligible nurses.

Thematic Analysis
The following were noted as barriers:
1. Confusing program requirements.
2. Time, money and lack of recognition.
3. Lack of nurse leader support.
4. Inconsistent review process.

Limitations
The author, with the assistance of a bio-statistician, created an evaluation questionnaire, based on evidence found in the literature. This new instrument was untested for reliability and validity.

Implications for Nursing
As the current shortage of experienced nurses at the bedside continues, nurse leaders need to continue to examine clinical ladder programs in their medical centers.

Providing recognition, mentoring, protective time for committee work, and communication is key to meeting the expectations of clinical nurses.

Fall 2015 Results
1. An increase from 15% successful application to 22% was noted.
2. 51% of units are scoring better than benchmark for nursing quality sensitive indicators and patient satisfaction.