



## Review

# The impact of nurse residency programs in the United States on improving retention and satisfaction of new nurse hires: An evidence-based literature review<sup>☆</sup>

Caitlin M. Eckerson<sup>1</sup>

10 Fowlerhouse RD Wappinger Falls, NY 12590, United States of America

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## ABSTRACT

Entry into practice for newly graduated nurses can be a demanding and overwhelming experience. These stressful work conditions have contributed to decreased retention and satisfaction amongst new nurse hires. The aim of this literature review is to answer the following question: in newly hired BSN graduates, how would the use of a one-year nurse residency program compared to a traditional orientation affect turnover rates and reported satisfaction of the new nurse hires over a one-year period? Peer-reviewed research and systematic reviews between the years of 2012–2017 found on the Medline, Nursing & Allied health, and CINHAL were used. Inclusion criteria were peer-reviewed literature that addressed the impact of one-year NRPs on nurse retention or nurse satisfaction. Exclusion criteria were articles that addressed NRPs without discussing retention or satisfaction. The JHEBP Appraisal Tools were used to extract and appraise evidence. Use of NRPs showed increased satisfaction and retention of new nurse graduates over a one-year period, leading to the conceptualization that this is a more effective method than traditional orientations for new nurse hires.

## 1. The Impact of Nurse Residency Programs on Satisfaction and Retention of New Nurse Hires

Transitioning from the student nurse role to the practicing nurse role has been identified as a stressful and challenging time for new nurses as they try to adjust to caring for multiple patients with chronic, complex health conditions (Van Camp and Chappy, 2017). The challenging evolution can last as long as 12 months and has been shown to be a contributing factor for a high turn-over rate amongst new nurses during their first year of hire (Olsen-Sitki et al., 2012). Research studying the impact of hospital work environments on retention of new nurse hires found that new nurses experience less anxiety and stress in environments that foster a safe learning environment and effective communication and support (Cochran, 2017).

This is a relevant issue to nursing education because, as educators, it is vital to assess the needs of new graduates and develop effective transitional programs that will empower new nurses to practice with confidence in a safe and proficient manner, which may lead to increased satisfaction and retention during their first year of hire.

In 2010, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) offered recommendations on how to improve the nursing profession to better care for the

increasingly complex patient population. One of the recommendations was to implement nurse residency programs (Al-Dossary et al., 2013; Lin et al., 2014). This recommendation was identified in response to evidence reporting retention issues and decreased satisfaction of new nurse graduates due to stressful work environments, increased patient acuity, and lack of confidence in skill and critical judgment (Al-Dossary et al., 2013). Further studies also found that as many as 90% of hospital nurse leaders felt that new graduate nurses are ill-equipped to safely and proficiently practice as a registered nurse (Al-Dossary et al., 2013). Transitioning from the student role to the fully practicing nurse role can be stressful and overwhelming, leading to 35–60% of nurses leaving their first place of employment within one year (Van Camp and Chappy, 2017). These high turnover rates can have detrimental financial implications, costing approximately \$88,000 per nurse due to lost revenue spent on training and having to replace the nurse (Van Camp and Chappy, 2017).

A consistent finding amongst current evidence-based literature has found that nurse residency programs should be at least 10–15 months in order to successfully prepare the new nurse for independent practice (Cochran, 2017). The aim of these programs is to provide continued support to new nurses during their first year of hire in order to foster

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E-mail address: [Caitlin.eckerson@gmail.com](mailto:Caitlin.eckerson@gmail.com).

<sup>1</sup> This author did not have any institutional affiliations at the time of this review.

essential skills such as: critical thinking, prioritization, delegation, communication, leadership, and conflict resolution (Kramer et al., 2012). Common elements found in these programs consist of mentorship with a preceptor over the course of the program, and combination of didactic education, simulation, case studies, peer reflection and debriefing, and evidence-based practice projects (Cochran, 2017; Goode et al., 2013; Kramer et al., 2012).

In an effort to evaluate the impact of NRPs on new nurse hires the following question utilizing the PSCOT format (population, education, strategy, comparison, outcome, and time) was developed: In newly hired BSN graduates, how would the use of a one-year nurse residency program compared to a traditional orientation affect turnover rates and reported satisfaction of the new nurse hires over a one-year period? The aim of this review is to answer this question by analyzing current literature to determine the effects of NRPs compared to traditional orientations on retention and satisfaction of new nurses during their first year of hire.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Search Protocol

#### 2.1.1. Search Engines and Databases Used

Electronic search engines used to perform the search were: Medline, Nursing & Allied Health Database, and CINAHL. All databases used yielded a wealth of results and information to review regarding the topic of NRPs.

#### 2.1.2. Search Terms

A wide variety of terms were used to search for literature for this review. The keywords used during the search were: (a) nurse residency program, (b) BSN residency program, (c) baccalaureate nurse, (d) new nurse, (e) traditional orientation, (f) transition, (g) retention, (h) turnover, and (i) satisfaction.

#### 2.1.3. Boolean Phrases

Keywords were imputed into the advance search tabs with use of the Boolean phrase “and” or “or” to connect each keyword and narrow the results. Boolean phrases included in the literature search included: (a) nurse residency program AND satisfaction OR retention, (b) BSN residency program AND retention, (c) BSN residency program AND satisfaction and (d) new nurse AND nurse residency program.

#### 2.1.4. Age of Literature

Articles produced within the past five years (2012–2017) were considered for the review to ensure that the most recent evidence is being used. A search for historical, relevant data was also considered for inclusion.

#### 2.1.5. Inclusion Criteria

Articles produced from the search were assessed for inclusion. Inclusion criteria were: published in English, peer-reviewed, addressed nurse retention rates, addressed nurse satisfaction, preceptor-based with nurse residency program participation, one-year long nurse residency program.

#### 2.1.6. Exclusion Criteria

Elements that lead to exclusion from this review were: languages other than English, non-peer reviewed articles, programs that focused on preceptor-only orientations, addressed NRP without discussion of satisfaction or staff turnover rates, articles that discussed factors of NRPs that affected job satisfaction, nurse practitioner residency programs, and research conducted in hospitals outside the United States.

#### 2.1.7. Articles Selected for Inclusion

There were 299 articles located with 18 articles that were selected

to be appraised for use in the literature review. Of the 18 articles, 12 met the inclusion criteria to be included in the review. The John Hopkins Evidence Based (JHEBP) Appraisal Tools were utilized in performing a critical appraisal of the abstracts and articles to help identify the articles to be used.

### 2.2. Evidence Matrix

The 12 articles that met the inclusion criteria were analyzed for strength and quality of using the John Hopkins Evidence-Based Practice (JHEBP) Appraisal Tool. In order to organize the findings, information pertaining to the: setting, findings, observable measures, limitations, and quality rating were then recorded utilizing the JHEBP Individual Evidence Summary Tool. Please refer to the Appendix for this information.

### 2.3. Evidence Synthesis

Based upon the literature review it was discovered that the use of the NRP has had a generally positive impact on satisfaction and retention of new nurse hires. The evidence included a wide diversity of evidence levels and quality. Common themes present amongst the findings will be further discussed in this section.

#### 2.3.1. Synthesis of the Population

All 12 articles included in this study evaluated nursing graduates with less than one year of experience (Cline et al., 2017; Edwards et al., 2015; Fiedler et al., 2014; Goode et al., 2013; Lin et al., 2014; Medas et al., 2015; Olsen-Sitki et al., 2012; Rosenfeld et al., 2015; Salmond et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2016; Trepanier et al., 2012; Van Camp and Chappy, 2017). It was discovered that there were limited articles that described the impact of the NRP on just baccalaureate prepared (BSN) nurses. Out of the 12 articles, three evaluated only BSN nurses (Goode et al., 2013; Fiedler et al., 2014; Rosenfeld et al., 2015). The other nine articles evaluated both BSN and associated-prepared nurses (ASN); (Cline et al., 2017; Edwards et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2014; Medas et al., 2015; Olsen-Sitki et al., 2012; Salmond et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2016; Trepanier et al., 2012; Van Camp and Chappy, 2017).

#### 2.3.2. Synthesis of the Strategy

All articles included in this review dealt with NRPs. Six of the articles focused on NRPs initiated throughout a facility, or corporation (Fiedler et al., 2014; Goode et al., 2013; Medas et al., 2015; Olsen-Sitki et al., 2012; Rosenfeld et al., 2015; Trepanier et al., 2012). Three of the articles focused on specific specialties: one focused on pediatric NRPs, one on oncology NRPs, and one investigated NRPs in long-term care facilities (Cline et al., 2017; Salmond et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2016).

#### 2.3.3. Synthesis of the Comparison

Most of the articles compared the results of their studies regarding retention and satisfaction to national statistics (Cline et al., 2017; Fiedler et al., 2014; Goode et al., 2013; Medas et al., 2015; Rosenfeld et al., 2015; Salmond et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2016). One article compared the study results to retention rates at the hospital prior to the initiation of the NRP (Trepanier et al., 2012). There were no articles found that met the inclusion criteria that studied nurse turnover and satisfaction for those included in a NRP compared to a control group that participated in a traditional orientation.

#### 2.3.4. Synthesis of the Outcome and Time

Based upon the literature review it was discovered that the use of the NRP has had a generally positive impact on satisfaction and retention of new nurse hires. Satisfaction rates of the programs implemented in these studies were analyzed using various measurements. Four studies used the Casey-Fink Survey (Cline et al., 2017; Goode et al., 2013; Olsen-Sitki et al., 2012; Salmond et al., 2017). The

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