



The Rewards and Challenges of Becoming a Clinical Instructor

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Working full-time as a nurse, whether as a staff educator, manager or in direct care, is a fulfilling but very busy job. All of these roles require specific expertise, yet share a commonality in the requirement to educate other nurses. Education is an integral part of any nurse's job, with duties including but not limited to orienting new nurses, executing simulation drills, performing in-services, participating on committees and working on new projects, either on a specific unit or in hospital-wide endeavor (Dorin, 2010).

Challenges and Opportunities of Education

For educators, each day can present new challenges with the need for new solutions and the opportunity to work with and bring together many different groups of people. Nurses, patient care technicians and unit clerks are likely the primary groups, but physicians, physical

Abstract Frontline nurses working in the clinical area are a vital component to nursing education. Taking on the role of adjunct clinical instructor can be a rewarding way to increase one's own knowledge while performing the important task of educating the next generation of nurses. DOI: 10.1111/1751-486X.12083

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clinical instructors reflect this ideal

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therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, respiratory therapists and registered dietitians are also often participants in educational endeavors. Teaching effectively within diverse groups, identifying learning needs and evaluating learners' knowledge are essential. Combining these abilities with the clinical expertise in nursing practice is a desirable characteristic of an educator (Senita & Rose, 2009). Educators are able to bring together nursing practice with clinical guidelines, policies and knowledge sharing to make experiences more meaningful for staff.

Becoming an Adjunct Clinical Instructor

Since being a nurse is already a busy and continuously thought-provoking role, you might wonder why anyone would want to take on another role, such as that of adjunct clinical instructor. An adjunct clinical instructor serves as an in-

structor in the clinical area and works with undergraduate nursing students (Forbes, Hickey, & White, 2010). Perhaps the question to ask is, what valuable perspectives and knowledge can different nurses bring to this rewarding position? For example, a nurse manager may have many years of nursing experience, understanding accountability, patient satisfaction, budgeting, negotiating relations with physicians and working with the personal and professional needs of direct care nurses. Despite these accomplishments, a manager may feel undervalued in her current role. An adjunct faculty member has the reward of educating the next generation of nurses. Working with each new group of students allows you to share why you still love nursing; seeing the wonder in their eyes is refreshing, providing renewal for your daily job as a manager. An invitation from the School of Nursing is something to look forward to each year, a call to meet the next generation.

Rewards and Challenges

Those of us who teach the next generation of nurses feel that it's an opportunity, honor and

a challenge. Most clinical instructors have full-time jobs, families and other personal obligations, such as being a student themselves. Even with these challenges, the rewards from teaching are great and varied. Nursing is inherently a caring profession and many of the rewards stated by clinical instructors reflect this ideal. Instructors receive their satisfaction by watching a student grasp a complicated concept or master a clinical skill. Witnessing a student's growth from the first class to the last also provides the motivation to continue teaching in spite of the obstacles. As one instructor stated, "I am quite certain that I learn as much from them as they learn from me. And, isn't that what nursing education should be—the sharing of ideas, the creation of new ways to improve treatments, and the uniting as one to put patients and their care first?"

The majority of baccalaureate nursing students are filled with the innocence and energy of youth and many have a positive outlook on the future. Their passion will inspire you, as they announce, "When *my* patient tells me he has pain, I'm going to get his medication *right away*." As seniors preparing to graduate from their program, they are excited about launching their careers.

Teaching associate degree nursing students may offer a different experience for instructors. These students are often adults juggling jobs, family and school. They are less likely to be involved in some of the social aspects of college campus life, and are not as innocently impassioned about providing ideal care, as life experience has made them realists. These students are very serious about completing the program so that they can provide for their families, but are also looking for a niche they love.

Teaching both groups is enjoyable for different reasons, yet each offers instructors the opportunity to share expert nursing knowledge and shape the next generation.

Recent Trends

There has been a steady increase in enrollment in accelerated nursing programs across the country, allowing students with a previous career to return to school to pursue a degree in nursing. Associate degree programs have also seen an increase in the number of "second-career" students (Hader, 2010; Kohn & Truglio-Londrigan, 2007). Students may also be licensed practical/vocational nurses choosing to continue their education.

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