



## Rutgers/FOCUS wellness center: An innovative practice and an investment in the future of Newark



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### ABSTRACT

Interprofessional Care Models are becoming core concepts for academic programs. However, in clinical settings there are few opportunities for implement this model. The School of Nursing at Rutgers University began a journey to establish an innovative practice model that would provide the learning experiences that nurses and other professions could participate in. An overview of the program and descriptions of the challenges and benefits are presented here.

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### Introduction

The Rutgers/FOCUS Wellness Center is an interprofessional faculty practice of the Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey (Rutgers) School of Nursing, School of Social Work and School of Pharmacy. This center provides a collaborative learning environment for students from the health care disciplines of nursing, social work, pharmacy, physician assistants as well as a venue for faculty practice.

### The setting

Newark, New Jersey is located 17 miles from New York City. The New York City skyline can be easily viewed from many sites. Newark has a population of 277,727 and is 52% black and 34% Hispanic. It holds the distinction of being on the top 10 poorest cities in the United States; 26% of Newark's population is below the Federal Poverty Level. Health statistics demonstrate that there is a higher than average prevalence of: obesity, diabetes, hypertension, asthma, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, and violence (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/34/3451000.html>).

The Rutgers School of Nursing is a comprehensive educational program that provides educational opportunities at the graduate and undergraduate level. In 2014, Rutgers merged with another

state institution – the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ). Both the former College of Nursing and the School of Nursing of UMDNJ had a long history of providing services to the surrounding community. In 2009, the former College saw the selection of a new Dean, William Holzemer, PhD, RN, FAAN, an individual with experience in chronic illness, particularly HIV. Dean Holzemer identified that a lacking component of the College was a source for faculty practice. Acknowledging the changing health care environment and the importance of the roles of the advance practice nurse, he sought partners to make this a reality. Dean Holzemer identified, a space that previously was utilized as a health care outpatient facility but had been abandoned for many years. That space was co-located with FOCUS Hispanic Center for Community Development (FOCUS) a community agency providing services to the Newark community and located walking distance from the university campus. As Rutgers is a large university we have the core partners in Pharmacy and Social Work but also been able to tap into the expertise across the campus especially with the Schools of Business, Public Administration and Law.

### The partners

#### Rutgers University

Rutgers University School of Nursing has two campus settings, one in New Brunswick in the central part of the state with a traditional campus, and Newark which is an urban environment.

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Rutgers prides itself on being one of the most diverse universities in the country. While it has had a rich history of classroom and clinical education, what was lacking was a formal faculty practice venue. In 2010, a needs assessment was completed and the groundwork was laid to develop a practice site that would prepare nurses in an interprofessional model that would provide services aimed at improving health outcomes of the citizens of Newark.

The goals of the clinical practice the center include the

1. Establishment of a sustainable and long-term Newark community commitment that supports the mission of the University.
2. Support service learning.
3. Promote interdisciplinary, collaborative care in a nurse-managed center.

We were fortunate to be able to collaborate with two strong partners from the Schools of Pharmacy and Social Work to develop a model that would address the needs of the citizens of Newark.

#### *FOCUS Hispanic Center for Community Development (FOCUS)*

FOCUS is devoted to improving the lives of the citizens of Newark with a targeted population of the Hispanic community. They provide: senior-citizen programs, adult education (e.g., ESL), employment and training programs, and educational programs focused on health and nutrition. They also provide some specific programming for youth and their families through after school programs, summer recreational programs, and parenting workshops. However, the leadership of FOCUS had identified that a missing link was the health care of the individuals that they served.

The intersection of these two partners – Rutgers and FOCUS Hispanic Center – provided an opportunity to develop a health care program to meet the needs of the community. In coming together, the partners were able to establish the goals for an interprofessional collaborative practice (ICPC) model of care.

The Goals of the ICPC program are:

1. Develop & foster an ICPC team;
2. Improve access to preventive and primary care for the community;
3. Increase the numbers of persons with behavioral health issues who are also engaged in care;
4. Provide a venue to train health profession students in ICPC;
5. Disseminate best practices;
6. Ensure fiscal sustainability; and
7. Adapt electronic health record system that would be reflective of ICPC.

The model that was utilized as a framework for this program is illustrated in Fig 1. This model gave structure in which the team was to work.

#### **The team**

While the program is nurse-managed, the core team consists of faculty from the schools of nursing, social work and pharmacy. Decision making on the direction of the program is shared by these three disciplines.

The nursing component consists of nurses who are advance practice and faculty. Areas of specialization are Psychiatric, Adult, Women's Health and Family Health. We have also been able to have a nurse practitioner resident who was recent graduate of the College's Master's degree. Faculty from the College of Pharmacy, School of Social Work are integral to the program. This has provided an environment where there are both undergraduate and graduate students from the disciplines collaborate to provide care. Because of the demand of the community, a bilingual full time social worker is also on the team as well as a community health nurse who provides outreach to the community and provides informational settings and provides a presence on policy making boards in the

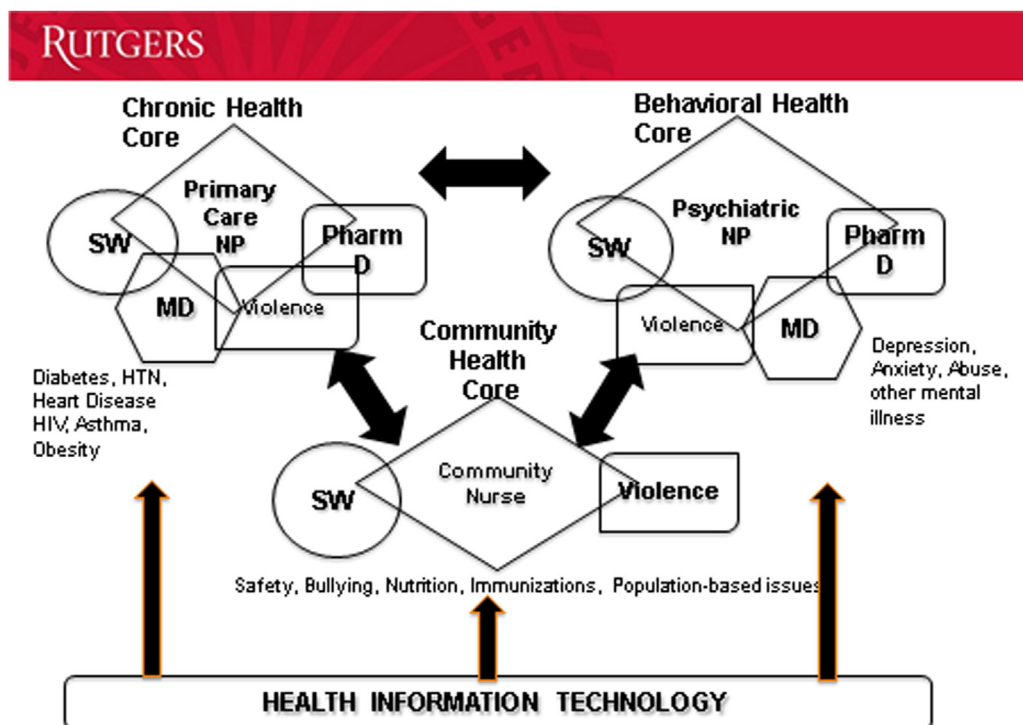


Fig. 1. Rutgers ICPC model.

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