



## Review

# The effectiveness and implementation of mentoring program for newly graduated nurses: A systematic review



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## SUMMARY

**Background:** Newly graduated nurses suffer from occupational stress during the transition from school to employment as a result of inadequacy, interpersonal relationships, and the overwhelming workload. Mentoring programs have proved effective in facilitating this transition.

**Objectives:** To evaluate the effectiveness of a mentoring program on the mentor, mentee, and organization.

**Methods:** The Cochrane Library, Medline, Ovid, Elsevier, Embase, CINAHL, CBM, CNKI, and WanFang Data databases were searched to identify relevant publications in English or Chinese up to October 2014.

**Design:** This is a systematic review.

**Results:** This review identified nine potentially eligible studies, and the methodological quality levels of the included studies were all ranked as level B. These studies revealed that the turnover rate can be decreased through a mentoring program. Additionally, mentoring can enhance nursing competency and establish a supportive workforce environment, resulting in positive outcomes.

**Conclusion:** This review reveals that a mentoring program has positive effects on the mentors, mentees, and organizations. A successful mentorship program should include rigorous mentor selection and adequate training. Additionally, potential barriers such as time constraints and scheduling limitations should be taken into consideration during implementation.

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## Background

### Descriptive of Condition

Transition was defined as a process of changing from one state or condition to another (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2012). When applied to the newly graduated nurses, the change was the assumption of the RN role, and the transition was the reorientation of the life perspective needed to live as an NP (Schoessler, 2006). For many newly graduated nurses, transition was complex, challenging, stressful and intimidating despite ongoing attempts to address this problem (Edwards, Hawker, Carrier, & Rees, 2015).

There is a considerable body of evidence indicating that the shortage of nurses has reached a crisis. In the rush to fill vacancies, an increasing number of newly graduated nurses have been placed in demanding roles without adequate training and preparation. According to Benner (1984), newly graduated nurses are in the advanced beginner stage of development. They view patient care situations as a challenge to their skills and ability; are task focused; lack organization for patient care; and lack experience needed to identify and respond to patient situation.

As a result, these nurses quickly begin to feel overwhelmed and discouraged due to stress, inadequacy, long shifts, and other reasons (Gardulf et al., 2005; Letvak & Buck, 2008; Wu, Fox, Strokes, & Adam, 2012). Also, newly graduated nurses expected the whole-task professional concept of nursing learned in school to be operational in the complex hospital work system. When it wasn't, they experienced reality shock due to discrepant role conceptions (Kramer, 2011). Numerous articles have described that within the first year of employment, a staggering number of newly graduated nurses quit their jobs. The turnover rate of newly graduated nurses in the first year ranges from 18% to 69% (Hayes & Scott, 2007; Salt, Cummings, & Profetto-McGrath, 2008; Scott & Smith, 2008). Hence, more emphasis should be placed on supporting the transition from school to employment to retain the new graduate nurses.

### A Description of Mentoring Programs

Mentoring is defined as a nurturing process with the aim of promoting professional and personal development, in which a more skilled and experienced person, acting as a role model, teaches, encourages, counsels, and befriends a novice (Anderson & Shannon, 1988). Mentoring is a symbiotic relationship aimed at advancing careers and career satisfaction for both the mentor and the mentee. In this long-term relationship, the mentor guides the mentee while creating a

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supportive environment and facilitating growth and transition (Hill & Sawatzky, 2011). This lifelong process is particularly essential for mentee to develop confidence in his or her professional. Ideally, it is a dynamic, collaborative relationship focused on mentee's personal and professional development (Zerzan, Hess, Schur, Phillips, & Rigotti, 2009).

Mentoring can be performed in many contexts, be based on a variety of purposes and theoretical approaches and be performed under different circumstances in a variety of ways with different duration and intensity (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). Mentoring programs have demonstrated promising success in facilitating the transition of new RNs. There is a vast body of literature illustrating that the use of trained nurse mentors who are matched with newly graduated nurses can decrease the nursing turnover rate (Faron & Poeltler, 2007; Halfer, Graf, & Sullivan, 2008; Hurst & Koplín-Baucum, 2003; Mills & Mullins, 2008; Scott, Engelke, & Swanson, 2008), enhance nursing competency and professionalization, and establish a supportive professional environment, thus resulting in positive patient care outcomes (Komararat & Oumtane, 2009; Latham, Hogan, & Ringl, 2008).

#### *Why is This Systematic Review Important?*

Thus far, numerous studies have demonstrated that mentoring programs play a positive role in facilitating the transition of new GNs, but we found few systematic reviews or meta-analysis, apart from Chen and Lou's (2014), especially regarding nurses in China. Hence, this systematic review will fill this gap in the nurse mentoring program literature. Furthermore, several existing studies have not clearly differentiated mentoring from precepting, a misclassification that is also present in the systematic review by Chen and Lou (2014), in which two out of the five studies included in the systematic review did not focus specifically on mentoring programs but instead focused on precepting.

Persaud (2008) explained that while the terms “preceptor” and “mentor” are often used interchangeably, there are key differences between them. A mentor is an experienced and faithful role model committed to a relationship with a novice who makes novices feel supported in their transition (Faron & Poeltler, 2007). In this role, the mentor acts as a supportive, facilitative advisor to help the novice transition successfully and to create a relationship that goes beyond the sharing of knowledge and expertise (Latham, Ringl, & Hogan, 2011; Latham et al., 2008). In contrast, a preceptor is defined as a person who shares a high level of educational and clinical knowledge and who serves as a clinical evaluator of the novice in the professional environment (Latham et al., 2008). In this role, preceptors are committed to demonstrating and assuring competent nursing practices (Faron & Poeltler, 2007). In this systematic review, we distinguish clearly between preceptor and mentor roles and set inclusion criteria to only select studies of mentoring programs.

According to the above reasons, a systematic review that focuses specifically on the implementation and effectiveness of mentoring programs for newly graduated nurses is warranted.

## **Methods**

### *Search Strategy*

The Cochrane Library, Medline, Ovid, Elsevier, Embase, the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), China Biology Medicine (CBM), China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) and WanFang Data databases were searched to gather relevant publications in English or Chinese with the following search terms: “newly graduated nurse”, “new graduate nurse”, “new nurse graduate”, “newly qualified nurse”, “newly registered nurse”, “novice nurse”, “new nurse”, “mentor”, “mentoring”, “mentorship”, “transition”, and “orientation”. There was no restriction on time.

### *Selection of Studies*

The abstracts of all of the publications identified by the search strategy were examined by two review authors. The full texts of all of the studies identified by either of the reviewers were obtained and inspected to identify studies that (1) targeted newly graduated nurses, regardless of gender, citizenship, or ethnicity; (2) were of experimental or quasi-experimental design and had adopted a mentoring program; (3) contained sufficient details describing the mentoring program;

and (4) were published in English or Chinese. The exclusion criteria were as follows: (1) reviews of the literature or editorial and gray literature; and (2) studies including multiple nursing interventions that do not explain the effectiveness of a mentoring program.

### *Quality Appraisal*

All of the eligible studies were assessed strictly and independently by two authors according to the criteria recommended in the Joanna Briggs Institute Reviewers' Manual Version 2008. Ten domains were considered. Studies that met the above criteria were rated A if there was a small degree of bias, B if there was a moderate degree of bias, and C if there was a high degree of bias.

After the two authors assessed the risk of bias independently for all of the eligible studies, any disagreements were discussed with a third review author. The quality assessment data are presented graphically and illustrated in the text.

### *Data Extraction*

The two authors extracted data from each study using a standard data extraction checklist. Any disagreement was discussed with a third review author. In addition, study authors were contacted for further information if necessary.

The collected information included the following: (1) general information: author's name, publication year, and country; (2) article characteristics: study design, sample size, intervention (steps, duration, and methods), measures (instruments), outcomes, and conclusions.

### *Data Analysis*

We combined the studies deemed sufficiently similar regarding the participants, interventions, and outcomes. However, we did not conduct a meta-analysis due to the lack of outcome measurements and because most studies were of quasi-experimental design. Thus, we conducted this systematic review with the aim of illustrating the implementation and evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring programs.

## **Results**

### *Search Results*

The search results and selection process are shown in Fig. 1. A total of 347 studies were obtained from the electronic databases. After removing duplicates, we identified 146 relevant studies. We then excluded 110 studies after reading the titles and abstracts. We read the full texts of 36 articles, of which 16 met the inclusion criteria. Additionally, a reference list search yielded five additional studies. Based on the quality appraisal, we identified a set of nine potentially eligible studies (Beechcraft, Santner, Lacy, Kunzman, & Dorey, 2006; Chen, Yu, & Chen, 2001; Faron & Poeltler, 2007; Halfer et al., 2008; Komararat & Oumtane, 2009; Latham et al., 2011; Li, He, & Peng, 2014; Mills & Mullins, 2008; Scott & Smith, 2008), among which seven were in English, and two were in Chinese. These studies were published between 2001 and 2014.

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