

The Development of an HIV Training Program for Nurse Practitioners

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Responding to a national need for a new workforce of HIV care providers as the first generation of providers decrease their practices or retire, the Duke University School of Nursing, with funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration, developed and implemented a program to train nurse practitioners (NP) to assume the full spectrum of primary care services needed by people living with HIV infection and various co-morbidities. The 12-credit program includes course work in HIV-related epidemiology; pathogenesis; psychosocial, political, ethical, and legal issues; and pharmacology and clinical management. Students complete 392 hours of HIV-specific clinical practice in addition to clinical hours required of all NP students. The program is the only distance-based program of its kind in the United States. Online didactic instruction is complemented by campus-based sessions with interprofessional faculty. We describe the 5 overarching goals that frame the program, and challenges and progress toward achieving those goals.

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In order to achieve the National HIV/AIDS Strategy goal of “increasing access to care and optimizing health outcomes for people who become infected with HIV” (White House Office of National AIDS Policy, 2015, p. 27), a robust workforce of providers skilled in HIV care management is necessary, yet

many of the first generation of HIV providers are beginning to decrease their practices and retire. A 2008 survey of HIV providers by the American Academy of HIV Medicine (AAHIVM) revealed that nearly a third of the 392 respondents were in the later stages of their careers with plans to retire within the next 10 years (Gatty, 2009), and very few health professionals are choosing to replace them by specializing in HIV care. In 2011, the Institute of Medicine (2011) issued a consensus report highlighting the fact that not enough HIV primary care providers were being trained to accommodate the number of people in the United States who need to be tested and treated. The Institute of Medicine report also concluded that, in order to meet workforce demands, there was a need to provide more training opportunities for health professionals, and to extend these opportunities to nonphysician providers such as nurse practitioners (NP) and physician assistants.

In the spring of 2013, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) issued a Funding Opportunity Announcement, AETC Education for

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Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants (HRSA-13-253), intended to address the HIV provider workforce shortage. Five universities in the United States received grant funding to establish HIV provider training programs. This paper describes the program developed by one of the grantees, the Duke University School of Nursing.

Program

The Duke University School of Nursing (DUSON) has developed an HIV training program that increases distance-based education opportunities for nurse practitioners who wish to provide primary medical care to HIV-infected individuals throughout the United States. The design and implementation of the program has been guided by five overarching goals. This program brief outlines the progress toward achieving these five goals.

Goal #1

Strengthen the existing Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) curriculum at DUSON by offering a specialty focus in HIV within our primary care NP program. A 12-credit HIV specialty concentration was designed during Year 1 of the grant and was fully implemented in the fall semester of 2014. Students in any of the primary care-focused NP majors (Adult/Gerontology, Family, and Women's Health) were eligible to enroll in the specialty either at the time they were admitted to DUSON or at any point during their curriculum. Sample HIV specialty matriculation plans for full-time and part-time Adult/Gerontology NP and Family NP students have been devised and published on the school Web site (<http://nursing.duke.edu/msn-curricula>). HIV content has also been systematically integrated into core courses in the NP general curriculum to ensure that all NP students at Duke receive content in HIV diagnosis and management regardless of whether or not they have chosen to complete the HIV specialty. Examples of HIV content integration into core NP courses include:

- Advanced pathophysiology: Lecture on how HIV infection leads to immune dysfunction and the

opportunistic infections that can occur.

- Physical assessment and diagnostic reasoning: Students learn to recognize signs and symptoms of acute and chronic HIV infection.
- Clinical pharmacology: Students are introduced to the general concepts of antiretroviral therapy (ART), the classes of drugs, their mechanisms of action, and the effects of metabolic pathways on interactions between ART medications and other drugs.
- Primary care of Adolescent and Adult Patients: HIV content includes an overview of epidemiology and populations affected; principles of HIV risk, transmission, testing, and prevention; pre- and postexposure prophylaxis; identification of acute HIV infection; HIV symptom management; meaningful use of lab tests (CD4+ T cell, viral load, genotyping); reproductive options for people with HIV; and the interplay of HIV and comorbidities.

To help design the HIV specialty curriculum at DUSON, during Year 1 of the grant, a national role delineation study was completed to define entry-level HIV-related knowledge, skills, and abilities essential for primary care NPs entering the HIV workforce (Relf & Harmon, 2015). In that study, providers who were certified as either the Advanced AIDS Certified Registered Nurse and/or HIV Specialist completed an online survey ranking a set of HIV primary care-related competencies. In addition, the HIV specialty faculty met with key informants from various disciplines (medicine, mental health, substance abuse, law, advocacy, and social work) to identify key topics important in the care of the HIV-infected patient.

By the time students begin the HIV specialty, they will have completed core MSN courses including physiology, pathophysiology, physical assessment, and pharmacology. They have also completed supervised clinical practica in adult primary care. The following three distance-based, one-credit courses are taken by all students enrolled in the HIV specialty before completing clinical practica in HIV treatment settings:

- *Epidemiology and Pathogenesis of HIV/AIDS (N840)*: This course examines the epidemiology and pathogenesis of HIV infection. Current

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