

## Accepted Manuscript

Title: A unit-level perspective on the long-term sustainability of a nursing best practice guidelines program: an embedded multiple case study

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PII: S0020-7489(15)00267-9  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2015.09.004>  
Reference: NS 2629

To appear in:

Received date: 26-3-2015  
Revised date: 11-7-2015  
Accepted date: 1-9-2015

Please cite this article as: Fleiszer, A.R., Semenic, S.E., Ritchie, J.A., Richer, M.-C., Denis, J.-L., A unit-level perspective on the long-term sustainability of a nursing best practice guidelines program: an embedded multiple case study, *International Journal of Nursing Studies* (2015), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2015.09.004>

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## CONTRIBUTION OF THE PAPER

### What is already known about the topic

- Sustaining healthcare improvements is desired, but difficult to achieve in practice.
- Conceptualizations of sustainability and related factors vary according to the nature of the innovation, setting, and level of the system.
- Best practice guidelines were developed to increase use of best evidence in practice and to improve quality and safety of care. Although there is some knowledge about the complex process of guideline implementation in nursing, there is little understanding of how guideline-based practice improvements are sustained over the long-term.

### What this paper adds

- The focus of sustainability of a guideline program at the inpatient unit level of an acute healthcare centre was on the continuation of guideline-related practice improvements. For units with higher levels of sustained improvements, long-term program sustainability was characterized by three elements: benefits, routinization, and development.
- Key factors that influenced long-term program sustainability included: perceptions of advantages, collaboration, accountability, staffing, linked levels of leadership, attributes of formal unit leadership, and leaders' use of sustainability activities.
- The persistent and adaptive orchestration of sustainability-oriented activities by formal unit leadership teams was necessary for maintaining the program over the long-term. Of essence was their influence on the development of unit capacity in response to changing circumstances.

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