

Nurse Residency Accreditation: *An Approach for Organizational Engagement*

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For the last 15 years, the nursing profession has ranked highest in the deployment of honest and ethical standards in practice.¹ This leads to the question: as a respected and trusted profession, why do so many nurses report being disengaged in their work? An even more important question is why should health care administrators care about nursing engagement? Astute stewards of an organization's financial picture know the answer is money. Disengaged workers cost the US economy \$370 billion a year in lost productivity. Additionally, detached nurses cost organizations between 48% and 61% of an employee's annual salary.² Costs quickly add up, with health care organizations losing millions of dollars from lost nursing workforce productivity and turnover.



Because each organizational dollar is scrutinized, strategies for engagement remain a high priority for senior leaders in health care. Primary determinants for disengagement surround the ability to meet an employee's basic needs. Basic needs are defined as pairing the right people with the right job, setting clear expectations, and making sure employees have what they need to successfully do their job.³

Empowering nurses to have control and ownership of their practice is an effective approach that satisfies requirements for employee engagement. Kramer et al.⁴ describe nurse autonomy as 1 of 3 pillars for an engaging work environment. Organizations that set expectation and value around the freedom to make independent decisions specific

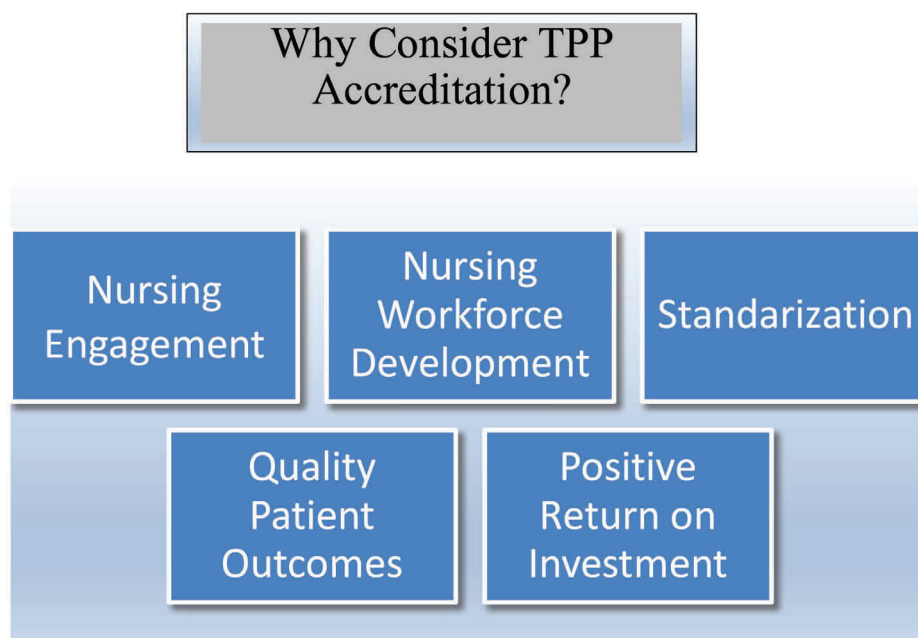
to nursing practice create a distinguished and engaging work atmosphere.

The transition-to-practice program (TTP) is one example of a nursing workforce initiative that empowers and engages. Nurse leaders who have championed the development of TTPs understand the power these programs have on nursing engagement and use them as an opportunity to demonstrate leadership commitment to their organization's nursing workforce development.

TRANSITION-TO-PRACTICE PROGRAMS

The concept of TTPs have been around for over 30 years. TTPs help new-graduate nurses transition into their new

Figure 1. Why Consider TPP Accreditation?



role through time and support from the organization. TTPs are robust programs, many times called residency or fellowship programs. The *Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*⁵ report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) called for the implementation of TTPs nationwide. To date, about 48% of hospitals nationally have established TTPs.⁶ In a recent update on the report, the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine⁷ found that TTPs have improved efficiency and retention of nurses; good models exist for organizations to implement; and most TTPs are acute care based. TTPs save organizations money and have been proven to be a positive return on the investment.⁸ Robust TTPs increase quality outcomes job satisfaction, and reduce stress.⁴ New-graduate nurses who are satisfied with their job are typically more engaged in their organization and profession.

CREATING LEADERS FOR THE FUTURE

TTPs set the foundation for growth of nurse leaders through emphasis on professional development and organizational enculturation. Residents obtain a global view of their role as it relates to achievement of the organization's goals. Post-TTP graduates are confident and have relationships across the organization that support (when ready) exploration of new professional opportunities. Participants in a recent accreditation review I was at shared that most of their professional development specialists as well as the program director were graduates from their new-graduate TTP.

Creating a vision for preceptors brings opportunity to raise precepting standards, develop the preceptor role, and mentor new preceptors. The structure, processes, and tools to support success also serve to engage preceptors. For example, a professional development specialist shared their open-door

policy and frequent one-to-one coaching with their preceptors. The ability to build relationships between the education department and point-of-care nurses inspired teamwork and communicated valuable insights for future formal learning experiences.

EXCELLENCE AND RECOGNITION OF TPP THROUGH ACCREDITATION

As TTP programs evolve, a virtuous next step for organizations is to seek accreditation of their TTP(s) to demonstrate standardization and quality programming across and between programs. Standardization is important for several reasons (*Figure 1*). First, it provides a consistent framework for competent nursing practice. An example is the clinical utilization of the American Nurses Association (ANA) Scope and Standards of Practice. The ANA Standards of Practice guide the nursing profession's critical thinking and decision-making processes for a minimum level of competence. Nursing recognizes the framework as the nursing process. Second, standardization allows organizations to compare programs outcomes equally between and within organizations and systems. Without standardization of practices and programs, comparisons at a national level would be prohibitive.

In addition to standardization of the structures, processes, and outcomes, accreditation demonstrates to various stakeholders, such as the community, consumers and employees, a level of organizational excellence and commitment. TTP accreditation indicates the organization embraces and upholds the highest standards to successfully support new-graduate nurse hires and the team who coordinate, manage, and evaluate their TTP. The most advantageous benefit is the development of a nursing workforce that delivers safe patient care and achieves quality patient outcomes.

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