

The Future of Master's Education: What Do Nurses Think?

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OBJECTIVES

Institute of Medicine Report:

Recommendation 6: Ensure that nurses engage in lifelong learning

Accrediting bodies, schools of nursing, health care organizations, and continuing competency educators from multiple health professions should collaborate to ensure that nursing students and faculty continue their education and engage in lifelong learning to gain the competencies needed to provide care for diverse populations across the lifespan (IOM, 2010).

Maryland Nurse Support Program II Grant:

Increase the number of qualified nurses in Maryland hospitals and health systems.

Towson University Research:

Describe nurse perceptions of future Master's level programs in Maryland



Research

Problem:	Declining enrollment in Master's level programs across Maryland and the United States.
Priority:	Conduct gap analysis of nurse perceptions of desired future Master's level programs.
Question:	What type of Master's level program is desired by nurses in Maryland?
Purpose:	The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of nurses in hospitals and institutes of higher learning in regard to Master's level education.
Design:	Descriptive, non-experimental, mixed method design.
Subjects:	Nurses at the point of care, hospital nurse administrators, nurse recruiters, staff educators, & deans and directors in institutes of higher learning.
Sample:	Convenience sample
Setting:	Healthcare settings and institutes of higher learning.
Feasibility:	Time- Two years + extension
	Funding- Nurse Support Program (NSP) II Grant No.19-121

Methods

Quantitative

Electronic Survey Emailed

April 2019

- ❖ Population: The sampling frame included every eligible nurse administrator and deans and directors listed in the distribution list identified by the investigator.
- ❖ Convenience Sample: accessible population representative of nurse administrators employed in healthcare and institutes of higher learning through the process of simple random sampling by the investigator.
- ❖ Research Instrument: Online 26 item-questionnaire consisting of consent, demographics, and twenty-six questions with a Likert scale of one to five.

Qualitative

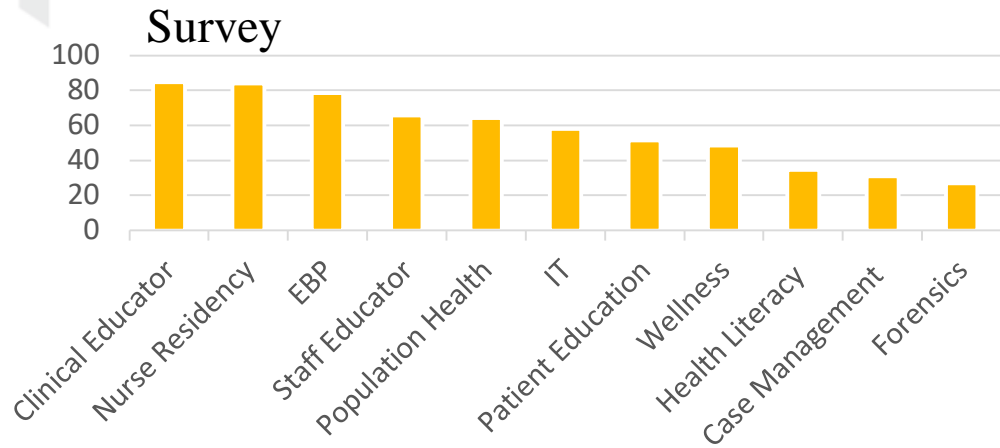
Focus Group- Hospital Site Visits

September Through November 2019

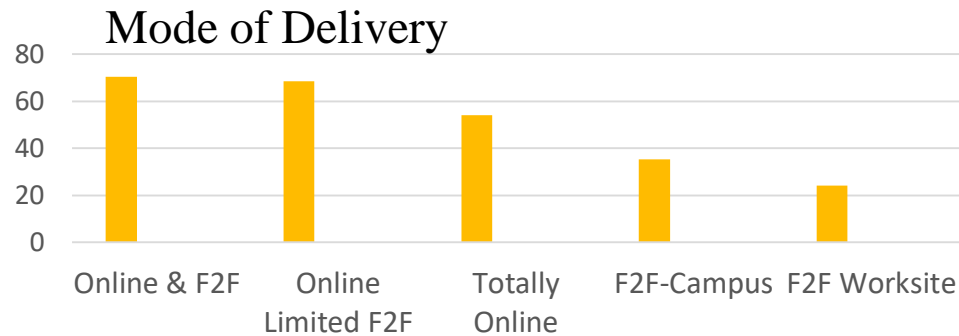
- ❖ Population: The sampling frame included every eligible nurse administrator, nurse recruiter, nurse educator, and bedside nurse on professional practice committees working within the healthcare setting of 10 hospitals identified by the investigator.
- ❖ Convenience Sample: accessible population representative of acute care nurses at the point of care, hospital nurse administrators, nurse recruiters, and nurse educators through the process of simple random sampling methods by the investigator.
- ❖ Research Process: Semi-structured interviews with a written topic guide to encourage participants to speak freely about their perceptions of future Master's level programs in higher learning.

Results

Quantitative



Potential areas of Master's nursing education program focus



n=48

Qualitative

Site Visits

- ❖ **Nurse Administrators and Nurse Recruiters & Deans & Directors:**
 - Discussed a desire for Master's programs focused on healthcare quality, safety, and patient outcomes. In addition, preparing bedside nurses with an understanding of their role in reimbursement (length of stay, throughput, readmission rates, value driven care, HCAPHS, staffing for safety, and resource utilization). Focus is to maintain quality staff at the bedside with opportunity for growth and advancement in their role.
- ❖ **The Staff Educators and Bedside Nurses**
 - Discussed a desire to enroll in Master's programs that afforded ease of access and flexible scheduling. Their desire was to engage in programs of advanced practice (APN, CRNA, Nurse Midwifery).
 - Discussed a desire to enroll in Master's level programs or certificate programs focused on leadership skills resulting in knowledge related to methods to increased staff satisfaction, improved patient outcomes, & understanding the complexities of healthcare quality, value driven care, reimbursement, length of stay, throughput, HCAPHS, staffing for safety, and resource utilization.

n=101

Summary

- ❖ Nurse administrators and nurse recruiters expressed a desire to support the nurses with continuing education and Master's level programs to aide in their transition to professional practice and improved healthcare business acumen in establishing clinical reasoning skills that improve patient outcomes.
- ❖ The bedside nurses and the staff educators expressed a desire to advance their practice through academic programs that offer a flexible course schedule, providing life balance, and a Master's degree that upon program completion results in a higher salary. Bedside nurses expressed interest in advancing in roles of healthcare administration, but did not feel they had the skillset or knowledge to address the business realities of healthcare (nurse retention, healthcare finance, and quality measures.) Without the business acumen they feared failure in leadership roles within that setting.
- ❖ Both administration and point of care nurses align with the idea of the importance of continuing education to advance the profession. One of the programs recommended denoted an "ala cart" certificate program where nurses selected the area of their greatest learning need after completing foundational leadership courses to advance to leadership roles with the hospital setting.
- ❖ One common theme surfaced out of all of the site visits. The theme includes a collaborative practice partnership between institutes of higher learning and hospitals in the development of certificate programs for training in units within hospitals that have higher vacancies such as perioperative services.
- ❖ Further research is necessary to align academic programs with healthcare nurses and administrators to integrate education, practice, and regulations for successful patient outcomes from the classroom to the clinical practice setting and beyond. This aligns with the IOM report, the NSPII grant, and NCSBN (2016) recommendations in support of improving patient outcomes by advancing the education of our nurses.