

Evaluating the Use of Reflective Practice Principles to Support Nurse Manager Well-being During a Period of Chronic Distress

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Background & Significance: As the COVID-19 pandemic transitioned toward becoming endemic, the impact of the pandemic period on healthcare workers was apparent. Amidst the many challenges that healthcare workers faced, the most challenging component for many, is that it was long-lasting and of an unknown duration. This increased the risk for burnout of teams and individuals, including the nurse leader. Healthcare workers that experience burnout are at higher risk of health issues, these are estimated to cost billions of dollars annually in the US alone. Burnout is also correlated with higher risk for adverse patient events such as falls, medication errors, and hospital acquired infections.

PICO: This QI project developed a program to support one specific role in healthcare, the nurse manager, with well-being during a period of chronic distress through the use of reflective practice principles. The project provided a framework for nurse managers to engage in self-reflection as a strategy for healthy coping, to create community, and to build resilience. This was expected to reduce the risk for burnout of the nursing leader and provide motivation to support the systems, teams, and other individuals that were experiencing chronic distress.

Evidence: Scopus, PubMed, and OVID literature databases were searched. Fifty-one articles were selected to provide context for how systems, organizations, and individuals experience chronic stress. Study designs included retrospective study, systematic review, rapid realist review, and quality improvement project implementation.

Intervention Implementation: A curriculum guided by the Dimensions of Leadership from the Center for Nursing Leadership was developed for nurse managers to engage in reflective practices to increase Joy in Work and support well-being. It was delivered to two cohorts in a series of five sessions over a period of 13 weeks. One cohort received live and in-person training on campus, and another cohort received pre-recorded and on demand modules via email.

Evaluation: Knowledge of reflective practice principles and self-reported Joy in Work was measured pre and post program participation and analyzed using a paired t-test. A program evaluation was used to assess subjective feedback using descriptive statistics.

Results & Conclusion: The two cohorts were small, however, a pooled analysis demonstrated that there was statistical significance in the outcomes measured and there was an increase in both knowledge and Joy in Work. A thematic analysis of the program evaluations found that nurse managers appreciated the offering that was designed exclusively for their unique role, they enjoyed the opportunity to gather and learn with peers, and that they desired more time to engage with the facilitator and each other. As hospitals and health systems struggle to recruit and retain nursing staff, the value of the nurse manager should not be underestimated. Senior leaders can demonstrate value recognition and support for nurse managers through offering programs and initiatives such as this QI project. This project was designed for nurse managers, however literature on reflective practice principles and results from the project implementation suggest that all nurses, including nursing students, can benefit from the learning and use of reflective practice principles.