

Professional Values and Roles of Clinical Nurse Leader

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Abstract

The clinical nurse leader is a advanced nurse generalist with education at the master's degree level. The clinical nurse leader role was proposed by the American association of college of nursing (AACN) to improve quality of patient care and to prepare nurses with competencies needed to thrive in the current and future health care system. Hence, the clinical nurse leader must bring nursing leadership needed at the point of care to ensure high quality safe nursing care. Comprehensive knowledge of the patient and case management skills, allows the clinical nurse leader to facilitate improved clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction.

Keywords: *Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL), Health care provider, Quality of care, Clinical Population, Human Dignity, Professional values*

INTRODUCTION

The Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) works in partnership with clinical nurses, physicians, other allied health professionals and the patients and families in strengthening patient centered care through a team approach [1]. The clinical nurse leader role has been developed by The American Association of college of nursing (AACN) in collaboration with an array of leaders from the practice environment. Two AACN task forces were convened to identify :(a)how to improve the quality of patient care and(b)how to best prepare nurses with the competencies needed to thrive in the current and future health care system [2].

CLINICAL NURSE LEADER

The Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) is a generalist Master's degree prepared nurse who is educationally prepared as an Advanced Nurse Generalist to improve patient care outcomes through use of the micro system assessment process and managing care delivery for a group of clients [3]. The Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) infuses and advocate for evidence based practice to improve the quality of care [4].

SCOPE OF CLINICAL NURSE LEADER

A clinical nurse leader is a graduate – prepared Registered Nurse focused on patient safety through evidence-based practice and quality improvement.

- The clinical nurse leader role is distinct from other advanced practice clinical roles, the clinical nurse leaders are responsible for designing, implementing and evaluating client care by co-coordinating, delegating and supervising the care provided by a health care team at the clinical level, to the administrative level, as like other nursing leadership roles [5].
- The Clinical nurse leader use evidence-based practice and quality improvement to ensure that patients receive the best care, making full use of the latest innovations in care delivery.
- The Clinical nurse leaders are part of an interdisciplinary team of physicians, pharmacists, social workers, nurse practitioners, and clinical nurse specialists; all working together to plan and implement the most effective medical care for the clients.

- The Clinical nurse leaders duty include, providing population-appropriate care and serving as patient advocates.
- As a clinician with advance practice skills and knowledge the clinical nurse leader serves in the clinical environment, executing outcomes-based practice and quality improvements and managing the health care needs of clients.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES

ALTRUISM

Altruism is a concern for the welfare and wellbeing of others. In professional practice, altruism is reflected by the clinical nurse leaders concern for the welfare of the clients, nurses and other health care providers [6].

The professional behaviors include:

- Demonstrates understanding of cultures, beliefs, and perspectives of others.
- Advocates for clients, particularly the most vulnerable.
- Takes risks on behalf of clients and colleagues.
- Mentors other health care professionals.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is the right, power and competence to act. Accountability includes the autonomy, authority and control of one's actions and decisions. Professional practice reflects accountability when the clinical nurse leader evaluates individual and group health care outcomes and modifies treatment or intervention strategies to improve the outcomes [7].

The professional behaviors include

- Evaluates client care and implements changes in care practices to improve outcomes of care.
- Serves as nurse leader for the environment, human and material

resources while co-coordinating care.

- Uses an evidence-based approach to meet specific needs of individuals, clinical populations or communities.
- Monitors and manipulates the environment to foster health and health care quality.
- Prevents or limits unsafe or unethical care practices in hospital and community setting.

HUMAN DIGNITY

Human dignity is respect for the inherent worth and uniqueness of individuals and populations. In professional practice, human dignity is reflected when clinical nurse leader values and respects all clients and colleagues [8].

The professional behaviors include:

- Provides culturally competent and sensitive care.
- Protects the clients privacy.
- Preserves the confidentiality of clients and health care providers.
- Designs care with sensitivity to individual client needs.

INTEGRITY

Integrity is acting in accordance with an appropriate code of ethics and accepted standards of practice. Integrity is reflected in professional practice when the clinical nurse leader is honest and provides care based on the ethical framework that is accepted within the profession [9].

The professional behavior includes:

- Provides honest information to clients and the public.
- Documents care accurately and honestly.
- Demonstrates accountability for own actions and those of other health care team members under the supervision of the clinical nurse leader.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice is upholding moral, legal and humanistic principles. This value is

reflected in professional practice when the clinical nurse leader works to assure equal treatment under the law and equal access to quality health care [10].

The professional behavior includes:

- Supports fairness and non-discrimination in the delivery of care.
- Promotes universal access to health care.
- Encourages legislation and policy consistent with the advancement of nursing care and health care.

ROLE OF CLINICAL NURSE

LEADER:

CLINICIAN: (Designer /Co-coordinator/Integrator)

Evaluator of care to individuals, families, groups, communities and populations. Also, able to understand the rationale of care and competently deliver the care to an increasingly complex and diverse populations in multiple environments.

OUTCOMES MANAGER

- Synthesizes data, information and knowledge to evaluate and achieve optimal client outcomes.
- To lead quality improvement initiatives and design research –based interventions that reduce error, increase patient safety and stream-line healthcare delivery process.

CLIENT ADVOCATE

Ensuring that clients, families, communities and health care professionals are well informed and included in planning and improving care. The clinical nurse leader also serves as an advocate for the profession and the interdisciplinary health care team.

EDUCATOR

Uses appropriate teaching principles and strategies as well as current information, material, and technologies to teach clients, groups and other health care professionals

under their supervision.

Mentor new members of the nursing staff, promoting evidence-based practice, critical thinking and clinical decision-making.

INFORMATION MANAGER:

Able to use information system and technology that put knowledge at the point of care to improve health care outcomes.

SYSTEM ANALYST/RISK

ANTICIPATOR

Able to participate in system review to improve quality of client care and at the individual level to critically evaluate and anticipate risks to client safety with the aim of preventing medical error.

TEAM MANAGER

Able to properly delegate and manage the nursing team resources (human and fiscal) and serve as a leader and partner in the inter disciplinary health care team .

MEMBER OF A PROFESSION:

Accountable for the ongoing acquisition of knowledge and skills to effect change in health care practice and outcomes and in the profession.

LIFE LONG LEARNER

Recognizes the need for and actively pursues new knowledge and skills as one's role and needs of the health care system evolves.

HOW TO BECOME CLINICAL NURSE LEADER?

REQUIREMENT

Registered nurses who want to become a clinical nurse leader must complete, at a minimum, a Master of science in Nursing (MSN) in Clinical Nurse Leadership. Admission into a MSN degree program with a focus on nurse leadership requires the following:

- Current and unencumbered RN license
- A Bachelor of Science in Nursing(BSN)

CORE COURSEWORK AND CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The AACN Board notes that the multi-faceted role of the CNL requires a Multi-faceted education .As such, they recognize the key components of the CNL education to include a liberal background in the arts and sciences, professional values, core competencies, core knowledge, and role development. The clinical nurse leader is a graduate-level nursing role. Therefore these professionals must possess, at a minimum, a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) in Clinical Nurse Leadership.

To meet the criteria for CNL certification through the AACN, graduates –level coursework must include a direct care core in the following areas:

- Health assessment
- Pharmacology
- Physiology/Pathophysiology

It must also include a essential core in the following areas:

- Quality and safety
- Program evaluation for improving patient and population outcomes
- Policy and advocacy
- Organizational and systems leadership
- Inter professional collaboration
- Informatics
- Evidence-based practice
- Clinical prevention/population health

Clinical nurse leader programs must prepare graduates to demonstrate achievement in the following core competencies:

- Quality improvement
- Interdisciplinary team care
- Patient-centered care
- Evidence-based-practice
- The utilization of informatics

In addition to a graduate nursing and direct care core the MSN clinical nurse leader includes functional area content, which

consists of clinical and didactic learning experiences that meet CNL competencies and clinical expectations.

The AACN’S CNL Curriculum Framework for client-centered health care includes the following recommended areas of study in an MSN Clinical Nurse Leadership Program:

- Nursing leadership
- Clinical outcomes management
- Care environment management

The AACN board reports that the following major threads must be present throughout clinical nurse leader program:

- Critical thinking/clinical decision making
- Communication
- Ethics
- Human diversity/cultural competence
- Global health care
- Professional development in the CNL role
- Accountability
- Assessment
- Nursing technology and resource management
- Professional values, including social justice

The AACN has also set forth clear definitive terms for CNL clinical experiences that must be included in CNL education programs. Students must complete a total of 400-500 clinical contact hours within the formal CNL program. Of these clinical contact hours, at least 300-400 must be an immersive experience in the CNL role involving a designated clinical preceptor for each CNL student. This partnership between the nursing practice arena and nursing education helps bridge the gap between theory and practice.

COURSE OFFERED

The American association of colleges of nursing (AACN) board defines a CNL as a

generalist clinician who possesses an education at the master's degree level or higher. The board notes that a master's degree is necessary because CNL must bring a high level of clinical competence and knowledge to the nursing team. Currently, there are 90 schools of nursing in united states with 192 practice sites in 35 states and Puerto rico that offer CNL program and over 700 nurses have obtained CNL certification through the commission on nurse certification (CNC). Also many colleges in United States offer online programs which are convenient for the working nurses. After graduating, the students will take the clinical nurse leader certification examination at their school or at a designated testing center.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION FOR CLINICAL NURSE LEADER

After the completion of an accredited CNL education program and clinical experience, a CNL is eligible to take the AACN clinical nurse leader (CNL) certification examination. The CNL certification program is managed by the commission on nurse certification (CNC), which is an arm of the AACN, and is governed by the CNC board of commissioners.

To qualify for CNL certification, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Hold a current RN license in the united states or one of its territories
- Hold a master's degree or higher from institution that is accredited by a nursing school accreditation agency recognized by the U.S. department of education and that prepares students with the competencies defined by the AACN
- Completion of a minimum of 400 clinical hours within their formal CNL education program
- Completion of a minimum of 300 clinical hours in a clinical immersion experience in the CNL role (this can be a part of the 400 total clinical hours).

RENEWAL OF CERTIFICATION FOR CLINICAL NURSE LEADER: CNLs must renew their certification every 5 years. To qualify for renewal, CNL must:

- Possess a current and unencumbered RN license.
- Have completed at least 2,000 hours of experience in the last five years(does not need to be in a CNL position)
- Complete at least 50 contact hours that support the CNL Exam Content Outline or Competencies and Curricular Expectations for Clinical Nurse Leader Education and Practice.

CONCLUSION

The Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) is the first new role in nursing since the nurse practitioner was introduced over many years ago. The Clinical Nurse Leader role was proposed by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) in response to concerns about the quality and safety of nursing care in complex, technologically advanced health care system. It is very important for the clinical nurse leader to respond to a wide range of challenges in nursing education and clinical practice.

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