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Use and Evaluation of a New Nurse Practitioner Fellowship Program

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree Doctor of Nursing Practice

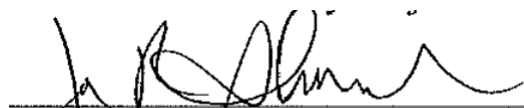
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Abstract

The project addresses fellowship programs for new graduate nurse practitioners. The goal is to determine if a nurse residency or fellowship program is beneficial in role transition as a new graduate nurse practitioner. Nurse practitioner residency or fellowship programs are typically 12 months in duration, have small cohort sizes of two to four trainees, and are composed of a combination of didactic educational content, clinical supervision, peer support and debriefing, and self-reflection. The scholarly project utilizes a survey design to measure the impact of a nurse practitioner fellowship program versus a standard orientation period. The scholarly project concludes with barriers and recommendations to complete for future projects.

Keywords: Fellowship program, residency, nurse practitioner, survey, orientation

Introduction

New graduate nurse practitioners face a great deal of stress transitioning into their new role as providers. Many nurse practitioners get hired into a new specialty without substantial training and need to be adequately prepared. Nurse practitioner fellowship programs help bridge the gap in practice. The general problem is to provide appropriate training and support to novice nurse practitioners.

As the nurse practitioner field grows, so does the responsibility as additional states become full practice authority. Nurse practitioners are a growing component of the primary care health workforce, with approximately 28,000 nurse practitioners entering the workforce every year (Salsberg, 2018). The Institute of Medicine's seminal report on the future of nursing recommends that "state boards of nursing, accrediting bodies, the federal government, and health care organizations should take actions to support nurses' completion of a transition-to-practice program (nurse residency) after they have completed a prelicensure or advanced practice degree program or when they are transitioning into new clinical practice areas" (Institute of Medicine, 2011, p.9). Nurse practitioners face increased patient complexity, productivity expectations, the stress of electronic health records, and insufficient support staff (Park et al., 2022). With these difficulties comes burnout and job dissatisfaction.

Many organizations provide a brief orientation period with little mentorship provided. New nurse practitioners are required to take on a complex workload in a fast-paced environment. While nurse practitioners have a wide variety of knowledge of medical diagnosis that they are educated on in school, they still need specific training for the specialty they practice once they graduate. If the nurse practitioner does not have specific training in the field they are practicing

in during their clinical rotation completing their master's prepared education; they are forced to learn on the spot.

Emerging research suggests that nurse practitioner fellowship or residency programs, which comprise a twelve-month, gradual clinical mentorship, are necessary and viable options for healthcare organizations to ensure safe and effective role transitions of new nurse practitioners into their clinical practice settings. The first Nurse practitioner residency program was developed in 2007, and since then, it has expanded throughout the United States, with programs offered mostly in primary care but also in specialty settings (Cappiello et al., 2019; Kesten et al., 2019; Martsof et al., 2017). A fellowship program includes fundamental skills such as using clinical practice guidelines, history, physical examination practice, interpretation of laboratory results, diagnostic reasoning, skills training, and managing specific populations and urgent situations (Kesten et al., 2019). Experts believe nurse practitioner fellowship programs or residency programs should consist of 12 months of training and help provide safe and effective patient care.

An important concept is properly training and providing new advanced practice providers with the appropriate preparation. Given the increase in the number of NPs entering the workforce, understanding how NP fellowship programs contribute to the future landscape of NP education and transition to practice is critical (Kesten et al., 2021). Researchers have found increased preparedness to practice and job satisfaction for NPs who completed residency programs (Bush & Lowery, 2016; Parkhill, 2018). The National Nurse Practitioner Residency and Training Consortium has emerged to offer national accreditation for NP residency and fellowship programs (National Nurse Practitioner Residency and Training Consortium, 2016).

Fellowship programs have expanded throughout the United States, including primary care and specialty fields.

A fellowship program can assist new providers with knowledge, confidence, and added support. Increased knowledge and support will lead to increased retention. With the advanced complexity of healthcare and the burnout rates of healthcare workers, a fellowship program for new graduate nurse practitioners will help promote high-quality care to all patients.

Significance to the profession

New nurse practitioners are required to take on a complex workload in a fast-paced environment. A study examining new NP graduates entering primary care found that 51% felt they were somewhat or minimally prepared for practice, 38% felt generally well-prepared, and only 10% felt very well-prepared (Hart & Macnee, 2007). Physicians and experienced NPs often admit to limited time to help support and mentor new graduates, creating further challenges for novice NPs (Sargent & Olmedo, 2013). Newly graduated NPs have expressed the desire and support for postgraduate transition programs to help mitigate feelings of uncertainty, role clarification, and autonomy associated with the transition to practice (Klein & Lugo, 2018). For newly graduated nurse practitioners to be prepared, they need more education and experience.

The nursing profession sees that other medical specialties are utilizing residency programs and now recognizing the need for NP fellowship programs. Many healthcare disciplines, such as medicine, pharmacy, and physical therapy, have competency-based residency and fellowship programs to help facilitate the transition to practice (Klein & Lugo, 2018). Various healthcare organizations have developed fellowship programs that provide education and supervised clinical practice for nurse practitioners beyond their formal graduate education (Kesten et al., 2021). These fellowship programs, also known as NP residency programs, first

emerged around 2007 and have grown in number ever since (Flinter, 2011). Fellowship programs are in various settings, including primary care, urgent care, and specialized settings.

Problem Statement

Newly graduated nurse practitioners often feel stressed entering into practice. The first year after graduation marks an important transition in terms of professional development, yet new graduate NPs often have minimal and uneven levels of support during this critical transition period (Zapatka et al., 2014). Nurse practitioner residency or fellowship programs are typically 12 months in duration, have small cohort sizes of two to four trainees, and are composed of a combination of didactic educational content, clinical supervision, peer support and debriefing, and self-reflection (Park et al., 2022). Fellowship programs provide new nurse practitioners with additional clinical practice and a mentor for support and feedback.

Nurse practitioner fellowship programs can help bridge the gap in practice. After a fellowship, an NP can overcome the anxiety associated with role transition, sharpen professional expertise in a protected, safe environment, and bridge into competent practice, allowing them to independently care for their medically complex patients (Zapatka et al., 2014). A fellowship program will elevate the institution as a supporter of NP education and training and help attract highly qualified candidates (Comola, 2014). Given the increase in the number of NPs entering the workforce, understanding how NP fellowship programs contribute to the future landscape of NP education and transition to practice is critical (Kesten et al., 2021). An important concept is how to properly train and provide new advanced practice providers with the appropriate preparation.

Theoretical Framework

Model Overview

Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory aligns with the project's focus of a nurse practitioner fellowship program. Perceived self-efficacy is defined as “people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994, p. 2). The author states that self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave. Bandura (1994) describes people's beliefs in their efficacy as developed by four primary sources of influence, which include mastery experiences, seeing people similar to oneself manage task demands successfully, social persuasion that one has the capabilities to succeed in given activities, and inferences from somatic and emotional states indicative of personal strengths and vulnerabilities. Perceived self-efficacy affects people's choice of activities and behavioral settings, how much effort they expend, and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences (Bandura & Adams, 1977). Empirical tests of this theory (Bandura et al., 1977) confirm that different treatment approaches alter expectations of personal efficacy, and the more dependable the source of efficacy information, the greater the changes in self-efficacy (Bandura & Adams, 1977). Fellowship programs provide new nurse practitioners with additional clinical practice and a mentor for support and feedback.

Constructs and Study Variables

This project will assess how the implementation of a nurse practitioner (NP) residency program (independent variable) compared to the conventional orientation impacts the NP's perceived role transition as measured by perceived self-efficacy and satisfaction (dependent variables). A survey will be created and sent to new graduate nurse practitioners who have completed a residency program. The same survey will be sent to new graduate NPs who

completed a conventional orientation. The survey will be sent to participants and must be completed within one month of completing a fellowship program or a conventional orientation. The researcher will conduct weekly reports of participants who completed the survey, and the results will be reported accordingly.

Review of Literature

Determining whether fellowship programs are valuable for novel NPs is essential for the future scope of the profession. The PICO question that is formed to address these concerns: In healthcare facilities that hire and employ new graduate nurse practitioners, how does the implementation and use of a new nurse practitioner fellowship (residency) program along with the standard unit/clinic orientation training, compared to the current, conventional staff orientation alone affect both administrator and practitioner's perceived role transition, knowledge and skill proficiency, self-efficacy, and satisfaction over a period of 6 to 12 months? Nurse practitioner fellowship programs are not a topic that is heavily researched. Some studies have analyzed the interventions of nurse practitioner residency programs and the outcomes of transitioning into practice. While there is research on nurse practitioner fellowship programs, there is a lack of a standardized fellowship program.

A literature search used key search terms derived from the previously described problem-focused PICO question. Several databases are included in the literature search overview. The search databases included Cochrane, CINAHL (EBSCO), Medline, and PubMed. The PICO-derived keywords used in this literature search included search terms for each PICO element. For the patient population and clinical problem [P], the following search terms were used: new graduate nurse practitioners. To investigate the intervention [I], search terms such as new nurse practitioner fellowship (residency) program, standard unit/clinic orientation training, and

conventional staff orientation. The search terms used to explore outcomes included administrator and practitioner's perceived role transition, knowledge and skill proficiency, self-efficacy, and satisfaction. A description is provided below of the evidence from the literature that was synthesized in support of evidence-based practice recommendations regarding the use of nurse practitioner fellowship (residency) programs and standard unit/clinic orientation training to improve administrator and new nurse practitioner's perceived role transition, knowledge and skill proficiency, self-efficacy, and satisfaction.

A critical appraisal and synthesis of the literature was completed, and the literature was synthesized for the following: implementation of a novel nurse practitioner fellowship (residency) program and standard unit/clinic orientation training to improve administrator and new nurse practitioner's perceived role transition, knowledge and skill proficiency, self-efficacy, and satisfaction.

A fellowship program can provide additional training along with a mentor to new graduate nurse practitioners. A study completed by Park et al. (2021) found that NPs with residency training were more likely to report enhanced confidence in independent roles, greater practice autonomy, improved team collaboration, increased job satisfaction, and decreased intent to leave than those without residency training. The study outlines a fellowship program as a 12-month duration with two to four trainees and consists of didactic educational content, clinical supervision, peer support, and debriefing. With physician shortages, there is a need to fill the gap, and nurse practitioners are a part of the solution (Comola, 2014). There is no standardized training as NPs enter specialized fields (Comola, 2014). There are approximately 150 NP fellowship programs that provide an accreditation option for NP residency/fellowship programs with an emphasis on NP competencies and program outcomes (Kesten et al., 2021). Painter et

al.'s (2020) study stated that hiring primary care NPs who completed the residency program within the system facilitated a smooth process for competent, confident, and productive NPs. Everyone involved in the study indicated the need for an NP residency program, and there was high satisfaction from the residents, faculty, and stakeholders.

Completing postgraduate training was consistently positively associated with participating in team-based care, and those who completed residency training had higher odds of being satisfied with their primary nursing position than those without residency training. Park et al. (2021) completed a survey that demonstrated that 85% of NPs with residency training said that they were able to practice to the full extent of their knowledge/education/training, as 82% without residency training reported the same. Lastly, the survey revealed that 57% of NPs with residency training reported they had no intent to leave their position, versus 45% of NPs without residency training had intent to leave their current position.

Fellowship programs can help assist in role transition. Mackay (2018) states that a survey of already-practicing NPs found that a fellowship program would have helped them become more prepared for their current role. The survey results stated that 66% of respondents believed a knowledge gap existed between NP programs and NP jobs. They also stated a lack of mentoring, a need for further critical decision-making and coaching, and a need for further practice in prescribing, billing, coding, and interprofessional communication (Mackay, 2018). According to Meissen (2018), there needs to be more research to support postgraduate training for APRNs and healthcare institutions, academic programs of study, and government bodies struggle to financially support these programs because of the lack of data.

Research shows that nurse practitioner fellowship or residency is beneficial in role transition but lacks specific evidence and structure. The planned project will seek to determine if

fellowships are valuable to new graduate nurse practitioners. Specifically, the NP's perceived role transition is measured by self-efficacy and satisfaction. The study will use a survey to compare role transition and satisfaction from a new nurse practitioner fellowship (residency) program versus the conventional staff orientation. See Appendix A.

Objectives

The project will follow a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model to guide the project through completion. The following three objectives were established to achieve the aim of this project:

1.) conduct a review of nurse practitioner fellowship programs in the state of Ohio; 2.) conduct a literature review to develop a method of evaluation that will provide data on nurse practitioner fellowship programs; and 3.) create a survey to compare role transition and satisfaction from a new nurse practitioner fellowship (residency) program versus the conventional staff orientation.

Project Implementation

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory aligns with the project focus of a nurse practitioner fellowship program. Perceived self-efficacy is defined as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1994, p. 2). The author states that self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave. Bandura (1994) describes people's beliefs in their efficacy as developed by four main sources of influence, which include mastery experiences, seeing people similar to oneself manage task demands successfully, social persuasion that one has the capabilities to succeed in given activities, and inferences from somatic and emotional states indicative of personal strengths and vulnerabilities. Fellowship programs provide new nurse practitioners with additional clinical practice and a mentor for support and feedback.

Project Purpose

This project aims to distinguish if a nurse residency program is beneficial in role transition as a new graduate nurse practitioner. The PICO (population, intervention, comparison, outcome) question that is formed to address these concerns: In healthcare facilities that hire and employ new graduate nurse practitioners, how does the implementation and use of a new nurse practitioner fellowship (residency) program along with the standard unit/clinic orientation training, compared to the current, conventional staff orientation alone affect both administrator and practitioner's perceived role transition as measured by self-efficacy and satisfaction following the introduction of the residency program.

The following questions were asked to help aim the development of this project: 1.) How many nurse practitioner residency programs are available to the new graduate nurse practitioner? 2.) Does the literature support a nurse practitioner residency program? 3.) How does a nurse practitioner residency/fellowship program affect the satisfaction, retention, and confidence of providing evidence-based patient care compared to a new nurse practitioner graduate with the standard orientation period? In addition to being guided by Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, this project will also utilize the PDSA model to guide this project through completion. The following three objectives have been established to achieve the aim of this project: 1.) conduct a review of nurse practitioner fellowship programs in the state of Ohio; 2.) conduct a literature review to develop a method of evaluation that will provide data on nurse practitioner fellowship programs; and 3.) create a survey to compare role transition and satisfaction from a new nurse practitioner fellowship (residency) program versus the conventional staff orientation.

Method

The project will include a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. Data, including qualitative and quantitative data, will be collected using a survey method. The survey will be distributed to nurse practitioners who completed a fellowship program and nurse practitioners who completed a standard orientation.

Target Population and Sample

The target population for the study is new graduate nurse practitioners who have completed a nurse practitioner fellowship program and new graduate NPs who have completed a standard orientation within the past year. The sample will include around 100 nurse practitioners who have graduated within the past year and have completed either a fellowship program or completed a standard orientation. Inclusion criteria will include age, gender, and years of nursing experience. Exclusion criteria will consist of nurse practitioners who have graduated over one year ago.

The author will work with various intuition managers to discuss the project and reach nurse practitioners via email. An email will be sent to new graduate nurse practitioners discussing the study and the incentive of completing the survey. The author will submit a proposal for approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The purpose of an IRB review is to ensure, both in advance and by periodic review, that appropriate steps are taken to protect the rights and welfare of humans participating as subjects in the research (Institutional Review Boards, 2019). A waiver of consent will be given to participants so that the author can disclose the survey results. The consent will be provided via email before beginning the survey. Names will not be provided in the research findings. Data will be collected anonymously. The author

will collect additional data, including age, gender, years of RN experience, school from which the surveyor graduated with a master's degree, and RN background.

Outcome Analysis Plan

Instruments and Data Collection

The author is in the process of determining the survey that will be used for the project. Survey Monkey or Microsoft Word will be used for the participants to complete the survey. Survey Monkey would be used via email, and Microsoft Word would be used to provide paper copies to be completed at the participant's workplace location. The author will be responsible for collecting the data once surveys have been completed.

Analysis Plan

A t-test will compare the results and answers of new graduate nurse practitioners who completed a fellowship program versus new graduate nurse practitioners who completed a standard orientation. The survey questions utilize the Likert scale. Three questions on the survey collect demographic information. The other five questions will collect data on the nurse practitioner's perception of a standard orientation or fellowship program and are rated from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The data will be formatted in an Excel spreadsheet and formulated into percentages. Descriptive statistics will be used for the results of each survey question.

Success Definition

The measure of success of this project will be based on a high response rate of the surveys and the number of participants. The project will also be determined successful by a high level of confidence and satisfaction from Nurse Practitioners completing either a

fellowship/residency program or a standard orientation. Completing the project within the allotted budget and timeline will also help make this project successful. See Appendix B and C.

Limitations and Barriers

Anticipated limitations for this study include sample size and time. A larger group of participants may be more beneficial to the project outcomes. The timing of the project requires surveys to be answered relatively quickly. Nurse practitioners already have a busy schedule, so a survey may not be at the top of their priority list throughout the day.

Facilitators

Facilitators for this project include incentives for completing the survey and reminders to complete the survey via email. Nurse practitioners may not want to complete a survey with all the other tasks they must complete throughout the day. With an incentive offered, they may be more likely to answer the survey. It is easy to scroll past or read an email and forget about it. Sending out reminder emails may catch their attention or at a more convenient time for them to respond. Also, with hope that nurses in a fellowship are interested in the project to gain more insight into nurse practitioner fellowships for the future.

Timeline and Budget

The timeline for the project is eleven months. Once the final scholarly project and Internal Review Board (IRB) are approved, the author will start the project implementation by contacting various nurse practitioners and sending out email surveys. Once all surveys are sent back, the author will then collect the data. The goal is to complete the project between March and April 2023. See Appendix B.

The budget for this project includes the author's time, which compromises sending out surveys via email, sending reminders through email, and collecting data. There is an option to

print out surveys and leave them at specific intuitions for the nurse practitioner to fill out. The survey will be created via SurveyMonkey, which is a free website, or Microsoft, which is included by the university. The paper will be used from the university library. The university also provides the research databases used for this project. See Appendix C.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Future recommendations for the proposed project would be to establish a relationship with local nurse fellowship programs and directors to help aid in the process of getting the survey completed by various nurse practitioners. Another way to continue the project and survey collection is to attend the Ohio Association of Advanced Practice Nurses (OAAPN) conference and speak about the project. The proposed project can add significant value to the future scope of the profession. The DNP project hopes to add insight for other DNP students to expand upon and complete the research on whether a nurse practitioner fellowship program supports role transition and increases satisfaction and confidence.

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Appendix A

Nurse Practitioner Fellowship and Standard Orientation Survey

1.) What is your age group?

20-30 years old	31-40 years old	41-50 years old	51-60 years old	60 years & older
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2.) How would you describe your gender?

Male	Female	Transgender	Prefer not to answer
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3.) How many years of nursing experience do you have?

1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	More than 20 years
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4.) Did you receive support from your clinical preceptor?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5.) Did completing a residency program or standard orientation help provide quality care to patients?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6.) Did completing a residency program or standard orientation help build confidence in your clinical skills?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7.) Did completing a residency program or standard orientation help prevent burnout in the future?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8.) Do you believe a residency program or standard orientation assisted with role transition?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix B

Timeline

June 2022	Develop FSP topic.
September 2022	Finalize the FSP project with the advisor.
October 2022	Complete IRB and Grant application.
November 2022	Complete final FSP with revisions. Start project implementation.
December 2022	Send email to potential NP participants.
January- March 2023	Continue collecting surveys, send reminders, and complete data collection.
April 2023	Complete project.

Appendix C

Budget

Author's time collecting data	\$3,000.00
Incentive for completing the survey	\$200
Microsoft word	\$0 (provided by Otterbein University)
Survey monkey	\$0
Paper (for surveys)	\$0 (provided by Otterbein University)
Research databases	\$0 (provided by Otterbein University)