Education and Accreditation/ Regulation the Journey to Safe Patient Care

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**The destination.**

The journey to every nurse’s ultimate destination of a safe patient care practice begins with education. There are several roads to take along the nursing education journey. Our education, like the roads we drive, requires maintenance. You must continually seek knowledge to maintain safe patient care practices. Nursing education, like driving, requires accreditation/regulation to keep it accurate and protect the public. The journey to safe patient care is a merging of education and accreditation/regulation.

**The Journey.**

The journey to education can take several routes such as non-baccalaureate programs and baccalaureate degrees of nursing. Finkelman and Kenner have defined the non-baccalaureate programs as licensed practical nursing (LPN), diploma nursing, associate degree nursing (ADN), and LPN to ADN programs. LPN programs are usually one year long and you receive a certificate upon completion. ADN programs are two years long and you receive an associate degree upon completion. LPN to ADN programs allow LPNs to receive an associate degree. Finkelman and Kenner defined baccalaureate programs as generic or entry, accelerated baccalaureate/direct entry, LPN to baccalaureate, and RN to baccalaureate programs. Generic or entry level baccalaureate programs are for students who have no nursing education. Accelerated baccalaureate/direct entry programs are for students with a non-nursing baccalaureate degree. LPN to baccalaureate programs allow LPNs to receive a baccalaureate. RN to baccalaureate programs allow ADN or diploma RNs to receive their baccalaureate degree. (Finkelman & Kenner 2016)

Choosing the route can be very confusing when trying to reach your destination. Let’s look a little closer at routes. Think of the programs as state highways and interstates. The non-baccalaureate programs are like interstates: they get you there faster but you do not get as much from the journey. You miss the little things. The baccalaureate programs are like state highways. You get to your destination quickly but you get to appreciate the little towns along the way and have a better understanding of the journey when you arrive.

An ADN teaches the nursing student fundamental and basics of nursing. Those include creating care plans and performing everyday nursing skills. With a BSN, the nurse has to think more outside the box, with creditable research, leadership, theory, and public health, which will, in turn, make the nurse more of a critical thinker, which will carry over into her practice. Therefore, patients will be safer. As a nurse with a BSN, you will become a critical thinker advancing you in everyday nursing tasks and avoiding deadly errors. (Kelbach, 2014)

**The maintenance.**

Like the roads we take to get to our destinations, our nursing education requires maintenance. Our education maintenance can be referred to as lifetime learning. “Lifetime learning is one of the major characteristics of a professional.” (Finkelman & Kenner 2016 p.136) Per Finkelman and Kenner, lifetime learning has three major components. They are academic education, staff development education, and continuing education. Academic education in lifetime learning can be the seeking of formal education such as masters or doctorate degrees. Staff development is systematic assessing and developing to enhance professional performance. Continuing education is professional education to augment knowledge. (Finkelman & Kenner 2016) University of Mary is an excellent route for nursing education. The nursing philosophy below runs like a parallel road to my beliefs.

The Nursing Division prepares nurse leaders to meet the healthcare needs of persons throughout the lifespan in an ever changing and complex healthcare environment to promote safe, ethical, transparent, and equitable care to diverse populations in various settings. We believe the essence of nursing is caring. Nurses are in the privileged position of witnessing life’s most intimate events when patients and families are most vulnerable and, therefore, are charged to utilize the art and science of nursing to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Fundamental beliefs concerning Teaching and Learning, Critical Thinking, Diversity, and the Nursing Meta-paradigm (Nursing, Health, Person, and Environment) and the Rule of Saint Benedict guide the endeavors of the faculty. The philosophy incorporates caring and education the keys to safe nursing practice, our destination. (*University of Mary*, 2016, p. 6)

***The accreditation/regulation.***

The act of driving, along with the roads we drive on, have regulations that are in place to protect the public. Regulation for practice or licensure is clear, though problematic in some cases. This type of regulation is based on state laws and regulations and leads to licensure. (Finkelman & Kenner 2016 p100)

According to Finkelman & Kenner, in 1950 nursing became the first profession to use the same exam for licensure across the nation. We use eight guiding principles to regulate the nursing practice. These eight principles are protection of the public, competence of all practitioners, due process and ethical decision making, shared accountability, strategic collaboration, evidence-based regulations, response to the market and healthcare environment, and globalization of nursing. (NCSBN 2007). (Finkelman & Kenner 2016 p101) Each state’s nurse practice act guides the regulations. “The most important function of the nurse practice act is to define the scope of practice for nurse in the state to protect public safety.” (Finkelman & Kenner 2016 p101) Along with regulation of the nursing practice, the education quality provided by nursing schools is regulated by accreditation.

Accreditation is a process in which an organization is assessed regarding how it meets established standards. Minimum standards are identified by an accrediting organization, and nursing schools incorporate these standards into their programs. The accrediting organization then reviews the school and its programs. This is supposedly a voluntary process, but in reality it is not; to be effective, a school of nursing must be accredited. (Finkelman & Kenner 2016 p99)

The governing bodies that provide accreditation of education programs have influenced the route some providers are taking to reach the destination of safe patient care by providing Magnet status to hospitals. The desire to seek this status symbol has hospitals making the entry level road to nursing in the facility require a baccalaureate degree.

“Beginning roughly a decade ago, the American Nurses Credentialing Center (2013) began designating hospitals as Magnet institutions based on certain quality and other benchmarks, one of which is that by January 2011, 75% of nurse managers must have at least a BSN.” (Auerbach, Buerhaus, & Staiger, 2015, p. 8)

***The conclusion/destination***

As you can see, safe patient care is a journey that can take many routes. Education and accreditation /regulation guide the journey. The destination is one every professional nurse wants to reach. Nursing as a profession has a commitment to the public to provide safe patient care.

References

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