How Continuing Education Can Help the Advanced Practice Shortage

In the May 2013 issue of the Journal of Nursing Education, Wiseman provides findings with great implications for those of us in continuing education (CE). Unless you have no nurses who serve as advanced practice preceptors in your organization or you have no experience with schools that offer advanced programs, you would benefit from considering these findings.

The survey focused on several factors, including those influencing preceptors for advanced practice students, which included the full spectrum, such as nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, administrators, educators, and informaticians. Among other questions, Wiseman (2013) wanted to know what the desired rewards were for those who precepted advanced practice students.

The investigator developed an online survey based on findings from a review of the literature and experience. The sample was one of convenience obtained through program directors of advanced practice programs. Although the responses comprised only 53 preceptor respondents, this study is important due to the increasing demand for preceptors to meet the increased enrollments and the demand for more graduates.

Of the eight incentives for precepting students that the respondents desired to receive, three of them related to CE: CE monies for programs at the school of nursing (SON), CE monies for programs of choice, and preceptor luncheon with a CE offering (Wiseman, 2013). Only items with monetary implications (which would include two of the three incentives above) exceeded CE.

This study is important information for those of us in CE, especially if we are in schools of nursing with advanced practice programs or organizations that provide preceptors for advanced practice students. Partnerships between practice and education need to capitalize on what each group brings to the partnership; and we have just received important information about what each of us can do.

If you work in a practice setting, you have the potential to provide recognition through additional CE opportunities for those who serve as preceptors. If you work in an academic setting, you have the opportunity to create special educational offerings for this group of colleagues who provide invaluable service to the school.

Much of the literature focuses on preceptors for undergraduate students. As a profession, we are fairly focused on how we prepare those graduates for practice, including the support from clinical preceptors. This study provides us with insight into what we must now consider for advanced practice students’ experiences. As the public accepts the role of advanced practice nurses and as some of those nurses are gaining increasing recognition as solutions to the current health care demands, we have the obligation to our practice colleagues to help meet their needs for continued learning.

After writing this much of this editorial, I contacted Dr. Rebecca Wiseman to validate that I had fairly presented her information and the implications for CE. After confirming my statements were correct, she added the following:

Many of our advanced practice faculty members are reporting that it is getting harder to find preceptors. We have heard that in some areas of the country preceptors are being paid. CE opportunities have a monetary value as well as assisting the preceptor in documentation for re-certifications. Emphasizing the value of the CE offerings may assist a SON in attracting preceptors. (R. F. Wiseman, personal communication, May 19, 2013)

Her point about the monetary value of CE may be something we have not tracked well. As she points out, emphasizing that value may help in attracting preceptors.
Our challenge is to create programmatic policies that benefit the development of this professional group and to provide the cost–benefit analysis that makes clear how a CE program contributes to the betterment of a school’s goal of providing new advanced practice graduates or how a CE program in a service setting attracts these valuable members of the health care team to meet the increasing demand. We cannot fritter away this opportunity!

REFERENCE

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