

Educational entry level for professional nurses

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Educational Entry Level for Professional Nursing Practice The first position paper calling for baccalaureate degree as the minimum requirement for entry into professional nursing was released in 1965 by the American Nurses Association. This stimulates an ongoing frustrating debate among nurses. The Occupational Outlook Handbook published by the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, nursing is the largest healthcare profession with 2.5 million jobs and is projected to generate 587,000 more jobs between 2006-2016.

Despite strength in numbers nurses are the least educated of all the interdisciplinary healthcare team members with whom they collaborate. Teams consist of physicians' pharmacists, speech pathologists, and physical and occupational therapists. Patients are living longer than expected and healthcare providers need the ability to think critically and provide health care services at levels never before imagined. Each of these disciplines recognized the importance of higher education to deliver appropriate patient care. The health care industry is changing rapidly.

Because of advances in medicine, technology and lifesaving techniques. Patients have a better chance of surviving traumatic injury, life threatening disease processes, and delicate surgical procedures than ever before. Results of various studies suggest baccalaureate prepared nurses are more likely to demonstrate professional behaviors important to patient safety. RN's educated at baccalaureate level or above have lower risk adjusted mortality rates and lower rates of failure to rescue. The failure to rescue relates to deaths in patients with serious complications.

Nursing is a knowledge based profession. Researchers have found perceived differences that are particularly related to education. These differences are perceived to be related to nurses with bachelor's degrees:

- Greater critical thinking skills
- Less task oriented
- More professionalism
- Stronger leadership skills
- More focused on continuity of care and outcome
- More focus on psychosocial components, communication and patient teaching.

It is important to me for nursing to represent a credible profession that reduces the best independent critical thinking healthcare professionals that provide safe, quality patient care. It is important for nursing leaders and managers when evaluating patient outcomes as they relate to educational levels of nurses. Current research by Linda Aiken found that patient outcomes are related to educational levels of RN's. The results of Aiken's research also found that a 10% increase in nurses with BSN degrees caring for the patients decreased the risk of patient death and failure to rescue by 5%. Everyone in the healthcare system would benefit from improved patient outcomes.

Educational mobility to the BSN level is important to positive outcomes, creation of a reliable professional identity and unity among nurses. I believe the salaries of nurses are directly tied to our educational status. More agencies should utilize the human resources departments to develop tuition reimbursement programs and promote higher education of their employees. Educational institutions should develop committees to perform research and look deeper in the nursing educational curriculum and provide surveys to obtain public opinion of nurse educational levels.

A common finding from the articles addressed the fact that resources need to be redirected to support baccalaureate entry and end licensure at the associated degree and diploma levels. The on or begins in community colleges and end in four year degree granting institutions. The research included the need for funding to support community college and university collaborations. The development of an action plan for Professional Development is very important. Managers and leaders should include this process in performance improvement sessions and during coaching and counseling.

Personal improvement of staff provides the promotion to a better position to assist others. Members of staff should consider returning to school, certification or credentialing, and participation on committees for educational advancement. A plan should be created to develop goals, review goals and action plans frequently, set timelines and commit to completion. Nurses must move further along the educational continuum and prepare a strong well educated workforce. RN's are important to patient safety at any level of education and play a vital role in lowering mortality rates, preventing medical errors, and ensuring quality outcomes.

Nurses with various levels of educational preparation will continue to practice for many years to come, but a decision about the future education of nurses needs to be made now. References Mark, B. , Salyer, J. , Wan, T. (2003) Professional nursing practice: impact on organizational and patient outcomes. JONA 33(4), 224-234. Goodin, H. (2004) The shortage in the united states of America: an integrative review of the literature Journal of

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