

Providence Nursing Institute: Advancing Nurses, Advancing Patient Care

By Nora Haile

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Providence Southern California's decision to launch a nursing institute aligned with its focus on advancing and enhancing the professional role of nurses in the future of healthcare. According to Kathleen Harren, RN and regional director of the nursing institute for Providence Southern California, the vision driving the project came from Katherine Bullard, regional CNO. "It became clear to the region, which has 4000 nurses, five acute and four post-acute hospitals plus hospice, that we needed to organize ourselves in a different way to optimize patient care delivery and the professional practice of nursing."

The Providence Southern California team set out to establish best practices not only in clinical practice development, but also in how to innovatively deliver patient care education to nurses as well as other medical professional colleagues. They operated under the imperatives that are the cornerstones of professional practice: practice content development, education and nursing research.

With medical centers and programs that rank among the nation's best, Providence was already ahead of the curve. Inspired and motivated by the report issued by the Committee on the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Initiative on the Future of Nursing, at the Institute of Medicine, they planned to enhance the role of nursing through education and training. "Dr. Donna



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Shalala (committee chair) and Dr. Linda Burnes Bolton (committee vice chair) are two who've championed the expansion of the nurses role in leading change and advancing health for Americans," Harren explained, then shared the gist of the report's four main messages: (1) Nurses need to practice to the full extent of their education and training, (2) Nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education and residency system, (3) Nurses should be full partners with physicians and healthcare professionals in redesigning care in American, and (4) Effective workforce planning and policymaking requires better data on the current healthcare professionals workforce, what they're doing and where they're doing it.

Those initiatives form the backbone of the Providence Southern California Nursing Institute's substantial commitment to advance the education of Providence nurses. "We're aiming for a higher percentage of baccalaureate, graduate and doctoral prepared nurses," said Harren. "Through a philanthropic relationship with our community donors, we'll have partners to fund scholar-

ships and help nurses advance their education both to a higher level and in specialty areas.” Over the 14 years Harren has been CNO in Providence’s South Bay region, she and others have worked with philanthropists to raise over \$1 million in nursing scholarship opportunities in that region. But she emphasized there is more to be done. “We need an expanded relationship with private philanthropy in the Valley region so all Providence Southern California nurses have those same advanced education opportunities.”

The nursing institute will advance Providence nurses’ contribution to care to the full extent of their license, role and responsibility. Because, as Harren shared, they are always learning, and literature always expanding, Providence formed clinical excellence teams to delve into specific areas, such as perinatal, looking at national organization (AMWA) standards and research, best programs and clinical practic-

es. “We wanted to be sure that each of the clinical specialties designs around the same clinical practices, standards, protocols or guidelines for that particular patient population,” she stressed. “For instance, our perioperative team implemented a pre- and intra-operative safety checklist – also known as the World Health Organization’s surgical checklist.” That small but highly important example demonstrates Providence’s determination to implement absolute best practices in different clinical practice arenas. Top directors of nursing education and professional development have created and will continue to create training and education programs that reflect the best the field has to offer.

So how does a nurse learn hands-on procedures and best clinical practices without a live patient? Through simulations. “We’ve used simulations in training for about eight years and are one of 13 expert

simulation sites nationwide,” she shared. “Realistic manikins – and ours even talk – are used to create specific clinical scenarios. High risk, problem prone areas and even in compassionate care.” The compassionate care, which builds on the Providence NODA “no one dies alone” program, has trained over 80 volunteers on how to be present in human caring at end of life. Simulations provide the closest experiential immersion possible, within a safe, constructive environment to sharpen skills.

From high tech to no tech, Providence Southern California has covered the bases. Key milestones have been set, with full recognition that, as Harren said, “The joy is in the journey. By the end of 2012, we’ll have clear structure and shape well underway. And at the end of the day, all roads lead to quality and safety.”

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