

VA Nursing: Effectiveness and Entry

Ann Arbor, MI

Overview

While high-quality nursing care is essential to delivering safe, effective care to patients, there remain consistent challenges to its delivery, experienced by all healthcare delivery systems. These challenges include cycles of severe nursing shortages, lack of continuity between care settings, and lack of the use of best evidence in providing care. The VA healthcare system has a strong history of assessing quality of care and responding to quality challenges through program and policy initiatives, and has been widely recognized for its major transformation through ongoing, consistent attention to patient and system data. Recently, the Office of Nursing Services (ONS) undertook several initiatives affecting nursing care and patient safety. Two initiatives being evaluated—Staffing Methodology and the RN (Registered Nurses) Transition-to-Practice Program—were mandated throughout VA in 2010 and 2011. Investigators have recently begun a third evaluation of the Full Practice Authority initiative, which was released in 2016. In addition, this Partnered Evaluation Initiative is responsive to requests for additional evaluations from ONS as they arise.

Long-Term Objective

The long-term objective of the **VA Nursing: Effectiveness and Entry Partnered Evaluation Initiative** is to support the work of the ONS by evaluating initiatives they have designated as key to supporting their mission. These include Staffing Methodology, RN Transition-To-Practice, and Full Practice Authority. These initiatives focus on supporting effective nurse staffing, retaining new graduate nurses in practice, and permitting full practice authority to three roles of VA advanced practice registered nurses (APRN) to practice to the full extent of their education, training, and certification—and to alleviate the current access challenges that are affecting VA. These include Staffing Methodology and RN Transition-to-Practice, both of which focus on supporting effective nurse staffing and retaining new graduate nurses in practice, as well as the planned Full Practice Authority initiative. The evaluation team looks at both the way the initiatives are being put into place and the effect they are having on patients, staff, and the VA healthcare system.

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Specific aims include:

- Assess the degree of implementation and current status of the Staffing Methodology initiative across VHA.
 - Assess the extent to which the defined elements of the Staffing Methodology initiative have been implemented across all VHA facilities; and
 - Assess the effect of the implementation of the Staffing Methodology initiative to date using available nurse staffing and patient outcome data across all VHA facilities.
- Assess the degree of implementation and outcomes of the RN Transition-to-Practice initiative across VHA.
 - Assess the extent to which defined elements of the RN Transition-to-Practice initiative have been implemented across all VHA facilities; and
 - Assess outcomes of the RN Transition-to-Practice initiative including competency, job satisfaction, and turnover across all VHA facilities.
- Support the Full Practice Authority initiative by using existing VHA data to evaluate comparability of procedures and outcomes among CRNAs (Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists) and anesthesiologists.
 - Describe the types of procedures staffed by CRNAs compared with anesthesiologists across all VHA facilities.
 - Assess whether outcomes of procedures staffed by CRNAs are comparable to those staffed by anesthesiologists across all VHA facilities, for comparable procedures and with risk adjustment of patients.
 - Assess the extent to which defined elements of the Full Practice Authority initiative have been implemented across all VHA facilities.

Principal Investigator

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Operational Partner

This Initiative coordinates closely with key stakeholders in the Office of Nursing Services (ONS). The mission of ONS is to “provide leadership, guidance and strategic direction on all issues related to nursing practice and nursing workforce for clinical programs across the continuum of care and across the spectrum of care delivery sites that impact our Veterans.”

For More Information

For general QUERI information, contact QUERI Program Manager Melissa Braganza, MPH, via email at *Melissa.Braganza@va.gov*.

www.queri.research.va.gov