Student Nurse Clinical Experience in a Dedicated Education Unit

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Clinical rotations vary by unit and clinical instructor (CI). New graduate nurses are being challenged to synthesize their knowledge and applied skills after licensing. This is directly impacting their ability to complete required training in acute care RN positions and can be partially attributed to the student nurse’s (SN) clinical rotations. SNs often rotate for partial shifts, resulting in the SN not being integrated into the care team and being pulled for task-based learning. New graduate nurses are hired to work complete shifts. During these shifts, the new graduate nurse must coordinate and prioritize patient care for the shift.

**Traditional Clinical Module:**

- Clinical rotations are coordinated between schools of nursing (SON) and healthcare organizations (HCO)
- SON employs the CI. CI vary in clinical expertise and do not need to be employees at the HCO
- SON set the SN learning objectives
- CIs guide and direct SN learning and how the SN is integrated into the unit
- Traditional clinical rotations vary in hours on unit. SN may leave after 6 hours or start in the middle of a shift

**DEU Clinical Module:**

- Dedicated education unit (DEU) rotations are coordinated with HCO, unit leadership, and SON
- CI and DEU mentors are required
- HCO identifies mentors and schedules consistently
- Mentors receive additional training to increase their knowledge of working with SN and learning objectives from the SON
- CI is on the unit for additional support
- Mentors are assigned two SNs at the start of the term for complete shifts

**Conclusion:**

DEU inspires a collaborative relationship between mentors, SNs, and CI. The mentors share their clinical expertise. The CI shares knowledge of teaching and learning approaches in nursing. This increases the SN’s unit socialization and integration into the care team. It also decreases task-based learning, because the SN is observing and participating in patient care for the full shift.

**References:**