Ask A Practice Advisor

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Working Collaboratively with Non-Nurse Managers

Does a non-nursing manager understand the scope of practice, patient acuity, and patient safety issues if never having been an RN?

As the health care system becomes more complex and resources are limited, it is increasingly important that leadership and process are clear.

The SRNA Practice team takes this opportunity to provide some background as it relates to questions from RN's who are either reporting to a non-nurse manager, or are within practice settings managed by a non-nurse manager.

Within this context, it is important to note that the SRNA does not have an opinion on the hiring practices of RN or non-nurse managers. Our role is to ensure patient safety and work environments that support RNs to meet their professional practice standards and competencies.

In addition, keep in mind that every situation is different. Knowledge gaps in clinical practice, nursing regulatory requirements, nursing practice standards that may impact patient safety may arise for RNs hired as managers into practice settings in which they do not have clinical expertise, or for non-nurse managers alike.

To help illustrate some challenges we hear, let's look closer at a fictitious setting and explore some options this RN would have.

Judy, age 27, is a RN who practices on an active medical unit with 36 beds. Their patients typically are high acuity, with short stays and many admission and discharges. There is staff mix of regulated and unregulated care staff. This medical unit is managed by a new non-nurse manager. Recently, they have tracked an increase in patient falls and medication errors. Judy is frustrated and feels morale is low amongst her colleagues. Her perception is the manager is not taking action to address these concerns.

How can she handle the situation?

There are a number of leadership strategies at the point-of-care that Judy can implement to work collaboratively with the manager to tackle unit concerns. It is the RNs responsibility to:

- Educate the manager of the RN scope of practice, Code of Ethics, and Standards and Competencies.

- Report situations that affect their ability to uphold the RN Standards and Competencies and Code of Ethics.

- Address those concerns and to work with the employer to develop processes and policies to address professional practice issues.

- Question the status quo and raise questions about practice standards.

- Use a win-win, low level resolution approach.

- Communicate to the manager that you are interested in nurse led quality improvement initiatives.

Moving Forward Team/Unit Strategies

As Judy and her team work together to address the issues, they consider some of these leadership strategies to increase team job satisfaction and enhance quality of care:

- Establish quality improvement teams to respond to staff concerns that may include regularly scheduled meetings.

- Establish formal and informal leadership roles at the practice level such as a clinical resources, project leader or rounds leader.

- Share and act on valid and reliable workload data.

- Involve nurses in patient care conferences and committees.

- Continue learning about evidence-based best practices and champion their integration.

There are many resources available to help in these situations. Practice advisors at the SRNA are interested in supporting RNs that are having challenges in communicating their inability to adhere to the Code of Ethics, Standards & Competencies and patient safety concerns to managers.

We would also like to support nursing and non-nursing managers. Please email us at practiceadvice@srna.org or call us toll free at 1-800-667-9945 or local at 306-359-4200 and ask to speak to a Practice Advisor. We look forward to hearing from you. Please visit our "In the Public Interest" section of the SRNA Web Site for a short video clip on RN Self-Regulation, The RN Act, and SRNA Bylaws. http://www.srna.org/index.php/about-us/about-us. The SRNA practice documents are available online at www.srna.org . The SRNA also wants to hear from you if you have any nurse led quality improvement initiatives that you would be willing to share. We are all learning together!

References

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Registered Nurses Association of Ontario [RNAO]. (2013). *Developing and sustaining nursing leadership best practice guidelines*. Retrieved from http://rnao.ca/sites/rnao-ca/files/LeadershipBPG_Booklet_Web_1.pdf