



Donor Impact Report 2007-08 Nursing Education – OutPEAK Program

The OutPEAK (Performance Excellence Acquired through Knowledge) program education fund supports nurses from across BC in their efforts to build knowledge, skills and experience through participation in specialty training and education at BC Children's Hospital. The OutPEAK program is a provincial expansion of the in-house curriculum at the Hospital and is designed to provide nurses with comprehensive education in caring for infants, children and youth with acute or complex care needs. The OutPEAK program gives participants the opportunity to tailor their education to their specific learning needs and environment.

Background

The OutPEAK program's objective is to enable nurses from around the province to participate and learn from the expertise offered at BC Children's Hospital. The program is also intended to help establish informal networks among nurses and other knowledgeable resources in BC.

Marketing of Program

The program was piloted on a small scale and is planned to launch with a bigger marketing plan after outcomes are evaluated. As such, there was no formal marketing plan or targeted process at this early stage of the program. Initial marketing of the OutPEAK program was limited to existing contacts within the different health authorities, based on relationships with educators over the years. Word-of-mouth and informal networks were the methods used to promote the program.

An application form was developed and sent to various educators and managers in the six health authorities of BC. Many enquiries, including five applications, were received.

Accomplishments

Five registered nurses applied to the program from various regions of BC. Their areas of interest included cardiology, oncology, pain management and general pediatrics at an advanced level. Their applications were approved; however, due to circumstances beyond our control, only one nurse was able to participate and complete the program. He spent three weeks at BC Children's Hospital, attending cardiac workshops, learning on the acute inpatient cardiac ward and intensive care unit and spending time with cardiac clinicians in the outpatient department.

Learning Outcomes

The nurse cited the overall experience to be beneficial and positive in many ways. Some of the learning outcomes included:

- Increased knowledge, confidence and experience in specialized care;
- Enhanced understanding of the continuum of care of patients and the roles of various clinicians involved in the care of children and families;
- Enhanced understanding of resources and support, and the ability to access these resources.

By caring for a wide range of patients, from newborns with Tetralogy of Fallot to 17-year-olds undergoing multiple open-heart surgeries, the nurse became more knowledgeable and confident in his ability to look after cardiac patients. The program also provided valuable contacts at BC Children's Hospital with whom he can consult for advice and guidance.

The three aspects he valued the most from the experience were: 1) gaining an increased degree of understanding of cardiac defects and how they affect the whole body, 2) being aware of large volumes of resources and information such as websites, leaflets and books available to nurses and families, and 3) developing increased awareness of the importance of family involvement when caring for young patients. Throughout his training, he was most struck by the attitude and compassion exhibited by staff at BC Children's and how they were focused on providing family-centred care. It was especially valuable since he works in a mainly adult nursing environment where family involvement is less prominent.

In his home community, he plans to share his newly acquired knowledge and to act as a resource. A meeting has already taken place with his clinical nurse educator and the educator will share the learning through workshops and teaching sessions. In his daily practice, he hopes to guide and inform colleagues by demonstrating skills he had learned and educating them to be more alert of certain medical situations. The contacts he established at BC Children's Hospital also empower him to approach these experts for advice should the need arise.

Challenges and Future Improvements

The Learning & Development Department used the pilot to assess the program and to identify areas for improvement. They found that it was difficult to connect with the appropriate contact person and promote the program in the various health authorities. Without a formal, connected network, staff at the Learning and Development Department did not know whether information was reaching the nurses who needed the program's funding the most. As the amount of communication and coordination of activities was quite extensive, there is a strong need for appointing dedicated people in each specialty area to act as the learners' contacts.

Other suggested improvements include:

- Developing a larger and sustained marketing strategy including print and web-based promotional information;
- Revising and refining the application process to encourage participation;

- Partnering with Child Health BC or other child health networks connected to provincial nursing educators, managers, chief nursing officers and other nursing leaders throughout BC;
- Determining clinical areas with the greatest need in each region and targeting those areas;
- Developing a smoother communication process between the learner and the Learning & Development Department in coordinating the education plan;
- Refining and continuing an extensive debriefing and evaluation process so that the program continues to improve and meet the needs of participants;
- Promoting the benefits of the program and the value in having a provincial network to improve their practice among nurses at BC Children's Hospital to ensure their active commitment to the program.

Vision for the Future

Program staff envision a highly effective OutPEAK program that is known and in demand among pediatric nurses in BC. The program will strive to provide opportunities for nurses province-wide to expand their skills so they can better care for acute and complex pediatric patients in their home communities. In addition, the program will create the impetus for the development of an informal provincial network of nurses caring for patients requiring specialty areas of care. The network will encourage discussions around practice issues and the sharing of knowledge and will ensure optimal care for patients.

Thank You

Thank you for your visionary gift in supporting the continuing education and training of our nurses. Your philanthropic leadership is integral to helping the program develop and will provide our nurses with valuable skills and knowledge, ultimately enhancing the care our children receive across the province.