

Holding Nursing Practice to the Highest Standards: A Transparent Standardized Professional Peer Appraisal Program

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Background

World class nursing practice cannot be sustained without owning and overseeing one's profession. Prior to 2013, our organization did not have a standard, systematic process to engage nurses in a formal peer appraisal. To address this need, an inter-disciplinary group convened and researched internal and external best practices. The group then created a formalized, transparent peer appraisal process that allowed registered nurses an annual opportunity to monitor and evaluate the quality of nursing practice based on our organizations Professional Practice Model.



Literature

Evidence suggests:

- Peer appraisals for health care professionals promote and sustain a more professional work environment,
- Empower nurses by giving them the professional autonomy to manage their own practice (American Sentinel University, 2014).
- An effective peer appraisal process can enhance the quality and appropriateness of nursing services.
- Can foster a transparent, continuous learning culture that focuses on patient safety, best practice expectations, quality improvements, and professional role development.

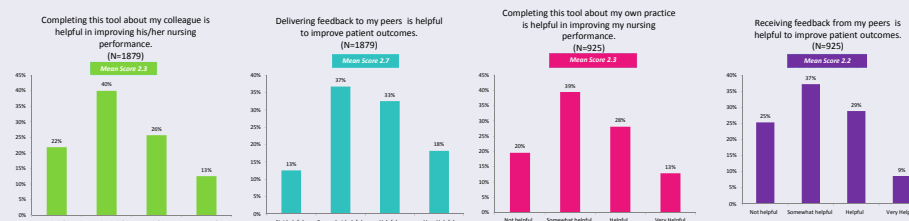
Methods

- A standardized tool comprised of a 22-item questionnaire was developed by the inter-professional nursing workgroup.
- An electronic survey platform was created and centralized in Nursing Administration to ensure process standardization and consistency. Inpatient nursing units were included in the 2014 Peer Appraisals.
- Peer Appraisals were conducted throughout 2014, based on unit preference.
- Inclusion criteria was: clinical registered nurses, worked on that unit at least 6 months, and were above 30% full time employment.
- Registered Nurses were asked to complete one self-appraisal and two peer appraisals of RNs who were selected randomly. RNs were given 6 weeks to complete all three appraisals.



Results

- Peer Appraisals were sent to 20 Inpatient Nursing Units, approximately 1,426 RNs.
- The overall organizational response rate was 65% for Self-Appraisals and 66% for Peer Appraisals.
- Of the RNs who completed the peer appraisal process 38% felt that peer appraisals were helpful/very helpful in improving their peers performance. 51% felt that the peer appraisals were helpful/very helpful in improving patient outcomes.
- Of the RNs who completed the self-appraisal process 41% felt that the self-appraisal process was helpful/very helpful in improving their individual performance. 38% felt that the self-appraisal process was helpful/very helpful in improving patient outcomes.



The peer appraisals provided meaningful data on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of nursing performance. Areas of strength included nursing teamwork and patient centered care. Areas of improvement include RN communication and professionalism. The appraisal results were used by the organization to provide educational and developmental opportunities to staff, by unit leadership for annual goal setting and supporting professional role development.

Discussion

Many lessons were learned during the first implementation that were used to improve the following year's peer appraisal process. In addition, multiple focus groups were held to receive feedback from clinical staff and unit leadership. Improvements suggested included:

- Improving communication of the peer appraisal process to staff nurses and unit leadership,
- Conducting unit level educational sessions,
- Logistical changes to the electronic platform.

These improvements have made a significant impact in the second year of dissemination in 2015. The response rate from staff increased to 98% (N=1524) for both peer and self appraisals. In addition, peer appraisals were introduced to the perioperative and ambulatory setting and had a 93% (N=288) response rate.

Conclusion

- CNO Engagement is critical.
- Staff Education on the Peer Appraisal Process is important; face to face meetings are best.
- Standardized roll out (hospital completes appraisals at the same time) may increase response rate.
- Systematic methods for reminders and updates are important for compliance.

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