CREATING A HOLISTIC HEALING ENVIRONMENT IN A CLINICAL SETTING: PROFESSIONAL CULTURE CHANGE IN NURSING PRACTICE

Mark Anthony T. Aquino, RN, ASN
Assistant Nurse Manager
Kaiser Permanente, Redwood City, CA.
mark.t.aquino@kp.org

Introduction: Kaiser Permanente has embraced Caring Science as the foundation of its Nursing Practice and Philosophy (Watson, 2008). The integration, specifically in the Critical Care setting, has been somewhat challenging. Employees are surveyed annually through the Safety Attitudes Questionnaire (SAQ) and People Pulse. These surveys provide employee input on a range of selected factors such as safety, teamwork climate, and perceptions of management. The Department’s results for the past two years have shown overall that communication and teamwork are areas of needed improvement. Specifically, results show lack of cohesiveness and less camaraderie, with interpersonal conflict ensuing in a chaotic and stressful working environment.

Significance: According to Watson (2008), the core of the Theory of Caring is that “humans cannot be treated as objects and that humans cannot be separated from self, other, nature, and the larger workforce”. Nurses express greater satisfaction with the care they provide when they have more input in nursing practice decisions. Nurses can contribute positive changes in the workplace when allowed to participate and have a voice. They can be instrumental in identifying ways of continued enhancement in the work environment thereby promoting their participation in fulfilling Kaiser Permanente’s mission of quality care, excellent and affordable service, and the best place to work.

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to create Caritas Unit Council. The focus will be in creating a holistic practice environment that will provide a supportive infrastructure within the department to build on relationships based on mutual trust and respect, to foster shared governance and personal and professional responsibility. The Theory of Caring Science, as well as the 10 Caritas Processes™ will be integrated and utilized to inform the council members.

Setting and Participants: The setting is in a 10-bed Critical Care Unit that serves a suburban community. It is also the Neuroscience Center for the Kaiser Permanente Northern California region. The Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) will be the main sponsor for the project. She is involved in the strategic planning for hospital-wide development and the integration of Caring Science Theory. The Department Manager is the champion and co-sponsor for the project. This author will be the chairperson of the Caritas Unit Council. In collaboration and support from my manager, I will coordinate and facilitate all activities agreed upon by the council members with focus on building positive relationships/camaraderie, and enhanced communication. The council members will consist of two frontline RNs from each shift.

Project Description/Process: In June of 2012, the management team in ICU identified a core group of frontline nurses that attended the Kaiser Permanente Caring Science Symposium. These nurses, together with the Manager and Assistant Nurse Manager, will convene in late September.
to develop the Unit Council charter, as well as to set line item agenda based on the data results of the SAQ and People Pulse surveys for the past year. All members are also required to complete the KPLearn Caring Science educational module to enhance their understanding and knowledge of the Theory. Since one of the areas of improvement is concerned with communication, the plan is to invite the local Performance Improvement Project Director to attend this first Caritas Unit Council meeting.

**Project Projected Outcomes:** There are no concrete project outcomes at this point, pending the convening of the council and the setting of Performance Improvement projects and activities. Expected outcomes are in two areas: positive measures of the culture and work environment improvement as evidenced by improved SAQ and People Pulse survey feedback; and improved patient satisfaction scores.

**Project Projected Evaluation:** This project will not start until early October. Partial/projected evaluation information should be available by the 18th International Caritas Consortium (ICC) meeting and will be added to the poster presentation.

**Future Directions:** It is intended that any positive outcome and evaluation from this project will be used in other inpatient adult care service areas. Together with the support and unyielding guidance from the CNO and local Management team, and the Caritas Coaches, we can collectively strive to move this Sacred work forward and infuse Dr. Watson’s Theory of Caring Science in our daily professional practice.

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**References:**