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Needed: Urologic Nursing Mentors For New Grads



Karen A. Karlowicz, EdD, RN

Take a moment and think back to when you graduated from nursing school. Do you remember the relief and sense of accomplishment you felt at having completed an intense course of study? Do you remember interviewing for and landing your first job as a nurse? Do you remember the anticipation you felt when reporting for orientation, the anxiety you experienced your first full day on the unit, and that moment when you realized that nursing school did not teach you everything you now needed to know? Do you remember the names of staff members who befriended you, and introduced you to the physicians who regularly admitted patients to the unit? Weren't these the work colleagues who also shared with you the guidelines, policies, procedures, and pearls of nursing practice as only experienced nurses could?

It is that time of year when health care facilities find themselves inundated with nursing graduates. According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, in 2002 66,000 nurse graduates took the NCLEX-RN® for the first time. The number of registered nurse candidates taking the licensing examination in 2003 is expected to approach this level, and may even be higher given efforts to increase enrollments in response to the nursing shortage. Thus, chances are good that you will find yourself soon working with a graduate nurse.

These new nurses are excited about having secured a paying job in the profession, and are determined to sample the many opportunities that nursing has to offer. Above all, these thoughtful, caring, and energetic nurses desire to make a difference in the lives of others. To do this, however, requires acknowledgment that their basic nursing education was simply the foundation upon which a career of professional practice will be built.

A Whole New World

Entry-level nursing education curriculums are necessarily structured to prepare nurses to be generalists, not specialists. Even so, nursing programs do

incorporate a great deal of urologic content, but it is provided at a basic level. For instance, in a fundamentals course, students are acquainted with urinary catheters and learn about catheter sizing as well as the difference between a straight red rubber catheter and an indwelling Foley catheter. The availability and use of specialty catheters (for example, Coudé, Malecot, or Councill) would not be addressed unless a patient assignment leads to the exploration of these products. Likewise, the incidence,

pathophysiology, diagnoses, and treatments for urologic diseases most likely encountered in the hospital setting such as prostate and bladder cancer, stone disease, and urinary tract infections are typically presented in medical-surgical nursing courses. However, problems such as erectile dysfunction and infertility, although important to the overall practice of urologic nursing, may be only briefly described and discussed in relation to other clinical conditions such as spinal cord injury or complications of testicular cancer.

Being a nurse graduate assigned to a hospital unit that cares for select patient populations, such as those with urologic problems, can be rather intimidating. Specialty nursing practice may seem like a whole new world in health care, with unfamiliar diseases and disorders, terminology, equipment, drugs, and procedures that were never covered in nursing school. As we all know, employment over time in the specialty and continuing education are required, and are the only ways to develop the nursing expertise that defines specialty practice. This indoctrination to specialty practice is also enhanced by the mentorship of an experienced nurse. As a urologic nurse, and member of SUNA, you are the best person to mentor a nurse graduate to the practice of urologic nursing.

Orientation Tips

To help you develop your role as urologic nurse mentor, I offer these ten tips to help you orient the nurse graduate to the world of urologic nursing.

1. *Introduce yourself and tell your story* — of how you got started in the practice of urologic nursing. Unlike critical care or pediatrics, urologic nursing is a specialty to be discovered; so take some time to share the career path that resulted in your becoming a urologic nurse.
2. *Introduce the nurse graduate to the local urologists* — this helps to establish a knowing, trusting, professional, and collaborative relationship between the nurses and physicians, which in turn enhances patient care.
3. *Show and tell about urologic procedures* — never assume the nurse graduate is familiar with a procedure. Instead, view every diagnostic test, procedure, or treatment as an opportunity to help your new co-worker become familiar with the nature and scope of urologic nursing.
4. *Give positive feedback* — even when it is for something simple like inserting a Foley catheter. It is important for the nurse graduate to know that you recognize that he/she did “it” successfully.
5. *Be a good listener* — especially for those times when patient situations are particularly challenging. The nurse graduate needs the support, empathy, and wisdom of your experience in urologic nursing to help develop his/her own coping skills.
6. Review the *Scope and Standards of Urologic Nursing Practice* with the nurse graduate since it provides the framework for all that they will do as a urologic nurse.
7. Share your copy of *Urologic Nursing* — published six times per year, the journal is a great resource for current issues in urologic health care.
8. *Invite the nurse graduate to attend continuing education programs sponsored by SUNA or a SUNA chapter* — this is your opportunity to acquaint the nurse graduate with the special network of urologic nursing professionals locally and nationally.
9. *Seek higher education* — as a mentor you are a role model. Therefore, if you are a diploma or associate-degree nurse, it is time you start thinking about earning a BSN. Similarly, if you are a BSN nurse, then it is important for you to explore graduate education. The specialty of urologic nursing advances only when the educational level of its members advances.
10. *Encourage the nurse graduate to join SUNA* — as membership in this professional association provides many opportunities to help build a career in urologic nursing. As many will attest, what you get out of the association is directly proportional to what you put into it.

It takes the new graduate almost 12 months to feel truly comfortable in the role of registered nurse. During that first year of practice, a strong relationship with a nurse mentor is vital to building confidence and socializing the new nurse to practice as a member of a team of urologic health care professionals. Are you ready and willing to help a new nurse, as someone once helped you, to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for a long and successful career as a urologic nurse? I hope so; there are new graduates who need your expertise!

Karen A. Karlowicz, EdD, RN
Editorial Board Member

SUNA's Mission

The Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates, Inc. is a professional organization committed to excellence in patient care standards and a continuum of quality care, clinical practice, and research through education of its members, patients, families, and community.

President's Message

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name in the “Referred by” box. There are great incentives being offered to you for recruiting 1 or more, 5 or more, 10 or more, and 20 or more new members. The largest award (valued at over \$2,000) will go the individual who recruits the most new members. Chapters will also benefit. The details of the campaign and the awards system are available in the *UroGram* newsletter as well as on www.suna.org

You might think this is just a sales pitch. However, I am sincere when I say that I am proud to be a member of SUNA. I'm sure you are too. Our mission statement states that we are “committed to excellence in patient care standards and a continuum of quality care, clinical practice, and research through education of its members, patients, family and community.” The more members SUNA has, the more patients and communities will be reached with information vital to their well-being. Let your colleagues join you in this common purpose. Join our efforts as we reach out for new members.

Marie Page, RN, CURN
President

