



EDITORIAL

Cardiovascular Nursing: Leadership Matters!!

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ABSTRACT

This editorial is designed to highlight the importance of leadership across roles and settings in global cardiovascular nursing with aim of promoting optimal cardiovascular health for individuals from diverse populations. Emphasis is placed on transformational leadership and corresponding characteristics including charismatic influence, effective, open communication, valuing of relationships, and consideration of individual members of the team. The importance of setting a clear and realistic vision, being strategic in implementation of vision-related goals and activities and empowering and mentoring team members is also emphasized. An overview of the mission and goals and related activities of the Global Cardiovascular Nursing Leadership Forum (GCNLF) including the Cardiovascular Nursing Certificate Program designed to enhance the clinical knowledge as well as leadership and advocacy competencies of cardiovascular nurses is provided.

Introduction

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a major cause of morbidity and mortality globally. ⁽¹⁾ Cardiovascular nurses functioning in an array of roles and settings are critically important in reducing the risk and global burden of CVD and in promoting optimal cardiovascular health across the life course of individuals from diverse populations. Effective leadership in nursing and health care is essential for optimal patient and family outcomes. Viewed in the context of challenging times in the global nursing and healthcare workforce, the question emerges: what are the essential “core” characteristics of nurse leaders that cross-cut settings and roles?

A recent systematic review by Specchia ⁽²⁾ and colleagues examined leadership styles and nurses’ job satisfaction. The major aim of this review was to identify and analyze the knowledge present concerning the correlation between different leadership styles and nurses’ job satisfaction. In so doing, the authors recognized that leadership styles have potential to influence staff as well as system performance and ultimately patient care.

While the authors provide details on six different leadership styles, they acknowledge that emphasis on “styles” has changed over time while transformational leadership has emerged as an important area of inquiry. ⁽²⁾ Characterized by charismatic influence, effective communication, valorization of relationships and individualized consideration, transformational leadership has been associated with an array of positive outcomes in nursing, healthcare, and across disciplines. ^(2,3) Methodological limitations of the Specchia ⁽²⁾ review notwithstanding, transformational leadership was positively and significantly associated with nurses’ job satisfaction.

A very recent perspective on preparing nurse leaders for CVD prevention by Dunbar and colleagues ⁽⁴⁾ added to the characteristics and competencies central to effective leaders within cardiovascular nursing. In so doing, they underscored the importance of establishing a compelling vision for CVD prevention and being strategic in its implementation. Adding to the benefits of transformational, visionary leadership, Dunbar and colleagues ⁽⁴⁾ noted the importance of fostering a proactive and engaged team and that such leaders (by role-modeling and open dialogue/communication) also promote the development of leadership skills and competencies in team members, the next generation of leaders in cardiovascular nursing. Relatedly, for optimal patient and healthcare system outcomes across leadership roles and healthcare settings, effective leaders facilitate and enable empowerment of team members with individualized mentoring and providing opportunities for professional advancement as well as appropriate contributions to strategic planning. ^(3,4)

Particularly noteworthy in considering leadership in global cardiovascular nursing is the Global Cardiovascular Nursing Leadership Forum (GCNLF). ^(5,6) A

project of the Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association (PCNA), the mission of the GCNLF is to engage and mobilize an international community of nurse leaders to promote the prevention of CVD and stroke worldwide through research, education, policy and advocacy. Major goals of the GCNLF are to 1) champion a global nursing movement for CVD and stroke prevention across the life course of all individuals and families; 2) empower nurses worldwide on the science and practice of health promotion and CVD and stroke prevention and, importantly in this context 3) empower nurses as leaders in CVD and stroke prevention. ^(5,6) To this end, a major goal-related initiative is the Cardiovascular Nursing Certificate Program ⁽⁷⁾ designed to enhance both knowledge and skills in cardiovascular care and support career development. The Certificate Program consists of twelve interactive modules that can be completed “on demand” and includes a pre-and post-test and content evaluation. To date ~ four hundred nurses from five continents have completed the Program. ⁽⁷⁾

The GCNLF has been meeting annually since 2014 with leaders from the six World Health Organization (WHO) regions – all committed to promoting optimal cardiovascular health for individuals and diverse populations across the life course. The global nurse leaders attending these meetings reaffirmed the need for nurses in different roles and settings to exert their competencies and skills in advocating for optimal patient care, evidence-based practice including implementation of procedures and policies that enable excellence in practice by all members of the healthcare team and opportunities for continued advancement in their respective settings. ^(5,6)

Conclusion

Given the workforce challenges and changing contexts of healthcare globally, cardiovascular nurses functioning in an array of roles and settings and at various stages of career trajectory must assume leadership roles with the aim of improving cardiovascular care and patient outcomes. Transformational leadership with emphasis on creating an appropriate and compelling vision and realistic, strategic plan for implementation, effective, open communication, fostering a proactive and engaged team and active individualized mentorship are important characteristics and competencies for effective leadership designed to optimize cardiovascular health across the life course of diverse populations.

Conflicts of Interest:

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