Association for Nursing Professional Development Update

JNPD

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Association for Nursing
Professional Development

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Beyond Clinical Skills

Advancing the Healthy Work Environment

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Environmental scanning allows nursing professional development practitioners to determine what factors are influencing practice and what programs and activities are needed. Incivility, bullying, diversity, inclusion, and self-care are all surfacing as key factors impacting the healthy work environment. Nursing professional development practitioners can provide programming to address this.

Nursing professional development (NPD) practitioners are constantly scanning the environment to determine what learning needs exists. The Business Dictionary (2018) defines environmental scanning as the careful monitoring of internal and external environments for the purpose of detecting early signs of opportunities and threats that may influence current and future plans. In a section outlining steps for strategic planning, Fordham University's website addresses environmental scanning, adding that environmental scanning is ongoing and involves tracking of trends and occurrences. The results are useful in shaping goals and strategies (Fordham University, 2018). Understanding dynamics and addressing discoveries uncovered through environmental scanning helps to build and support a healthy work environment.

Healthy Work Environment

The importance of a healthy work environment has been discussed extensively in the literature. The American Nurses Association (ANA; 2015) points out that nurses have the

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The author has disclosed that she has no significant relationship with, or financial interest in, any commercial companies pertaining to this article.

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potential to lead the way in improving health and health care for all, but to realize that potential, they must operate in an environment that is safe, empowering, and satisfying. They hold employers accountable for the fundamental duty of creating a healthy work environment for their employees (ANA, 2015).

The American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) identified six standards for establishing and sustaining healthy work environments:

- Skilled Communication—Nurses must be as proficient in communication skills as they are in clinical skills.
- True Collaboration—Nurses must be relentless in pursuing and fostering true collaboration.
- Effective Decision Making—Nurses must be valued and committed partners in making policy, directing and evaluating clinical care, and leading organizational operations.
- Appropriate Staffing—Staffing must ensure the effective match between patient needs and nurse competencies.
- Meaningful Recognition—Nurses must be recognized and must recognize others for the value that each brings to the work of the organization.
- Authentic Leadership—Nurse leaders must fully embrace the imperative of a healthy work environment, authentically live it, and engage others in its achievement (AACN, 2016).

Incivility and Bullying

A scan of our nursing environment has revealed that we have issues to concern ourselves with in NPD that go beyond clinical skills education, continuing education activities, and the activities that some may think encompass the totality of our role. Incivility, bullying, and the like are taking a front stage in the academic and practice arenas, and such behaviors decimate a healthy work environment. The ANA defines incivility as one or more rude, discourteous, or disrespectful actions that may or may not have a negative intent behind them. They define bullying as repeated, unwanted, harmful actions intended to humiliate, offend, and cause distress in the recipient (ANA, 2015). The ANA also states that incivility, bullying, and violence in the workplace are serious

issues in nursing, with incivility and bullying being widespread in all settings. Per the ANA, these incidents not only have a serious effect on the wellbeing of the nurse in question but also their ability to care for their patients (ANA, 2015).

The ANA is not alone in speaking on issues of incivility in nursing. The Tri-Council for Nursing published *Issues Proclamation on Nursing Civility,* a document issuing a call to advance civility. This document highlights that civility is key to promoting healthy, inclusive work environments and safeguarding patient safety (TriCouncil, 2017). The document references a resolution published by the TriCouncil and calls upon all nurses to recognize nursing civility and take steps to systematically eliminate all acts of incivility in their professional practice, workplace environments, and in our communities. The Tri-Council goes on to urge that nursing civility be practiced throughout the United States in order to establish healthy work environments that embrace and value cultural diversity, inclusivity, and equality (TriCouncil, 2017).

Diversity and Inclusion

Other factors that are detrimental to the healthy work environment include the lack of diversity and inclusion. I recently heard it stated that although diversity may encompass being at the dance, inclusion is being asked to dance! We have all heard remarks such as "I live in a diverse community" or "I work in a diverse setting", but simply being present among those who are different from you does not make for inclusion, which is the real goal of the healthy environment. I recently attended an event where there was good representation of people of different age groups. One would say this group was diverse. However, the constant jabs about "those millennials" this, and "those millennials" that made me feel uncomfortable and I am not even a millennial. So was the group diverse? Yes. Inclusive? No way.

Self-care

Finally, an important component in the healthy work environment is that of self-care. The increasingly complex work environment can contribute negatively to self-care, which in turn compromises the ability to deliver the best care. We are all familiar with the edict—in case of a loss of cabin pressure, put the oxygen on yourself first before attempting to help someone else, even your most loved one(s). This is of course because we better able to provide care for others if we provide care for ourselves.

What Does This All Mean for Nursing Professional Development?

It means that as NPD practitioners, we have to think outside all of the boxes to determine what programs and activities we can provide that will impact the environment in which care is delivered. As NPD practitioners, we have the capacity to significantly impact the practice environment and

influence, if not help drive, a culture change. Our role in the development of others includes helping them grow as professionals and enhancing their ability to contribute to a healthy work environment. This is surely a stretch from what many colleagues currently say they spend a lot of their time on—orientation, annual mandatory clinical skills validations, and other traditional mandatory topics programs. How novel would it be for us to take on fundamental elements such as civility, inclusion, and self-care in our professional development efforts. Roles of the NPD practitioner include being a learning facilitator, change agent, mentor, leader, champion for scientific inquiry, advocate for the NPD specialty, and partner for practice transition. Ever wonder why it may have been more difficult to realize the full scope of your NPD role in a current or past position? Perhaps these challenges are related to the health of the environment. This is something we can influence. There is space for addressing civility, inclusion, self-care, and the healthy work environment in every aspect of our role. Are you educating solely about clinical skills, policies, and procedures? Do you have programs in your curriculum that address the healthy work environment elements? If not, it is not too late to pull a few things together.

At the Association for Nursing Professional Development (ANPD), we have been performing our own environmental scans and self-assessments. This has led to the establishment of the Diversity Task Force for example. Additionally, ANPD has resources to help support members, including webinars such as Creating Joy in the Workplace Through Resiliency Building or Engaging the Millennial New Grad. For more information on ANPD webinars and resources, visit the online store at http://www.anpd.org/page/store or the professional development center at http://www.anpd.org/page/professional-development-center.

So, let us go out there and show that we impact more than clinical skills and that our scope goes way beyond policy updates and orientation. With each outside-of-the-box professional development program, we continue to bring positive change the practice environment!

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