Author's response to reviews

Title: The Critical Elements of Effective Academic-Practice Partnerships: A Framework Derived from a Case Study of the Launch Year of the Department of Veterans Affairs Nursing Academy

Authors:

Aram Dobalian (aram.dobalian@va.gov)
Candice Bowman (candybowman@gmail.com)
Tamar Wyte-Lake (tamar.wyte@va.gov)
Marjorie L Pearson (mperson@rand.org)
Mary B Dougherty (mary.dougherty@va.gov)
Jack Needleman (needlema@ucla.edu)

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Catia Cornacchia, PhD
Executive Editor
BMC Nursing

Dear Dr. Cornacchia:

I am pleased to submit the manuscript entitled “The Critical Elements of Effective Academic-Practice Partnerships: A Framework Derived from the Launch Year of the Department of Veterans Affairs Nursing Academy” for consideration for publication as a research article in BMC Nursing.

The nursing profession is currently exploring how academic-practice partnerships should be structured to maximize the potential benefits for each partner. The nursing literature provides many examples of partnerships that include one nursing school and one or more practice partners, but the evidence for the success of these partnerships is poor. Many of these articles describe the development and nature of the partnership model, but collectively they provide little empirical evidence to guide organizational decision-makers when they seek to design new partnerships or modify existing ones. Recent recommendations from a task force established by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) on academic-practice partnerships provides some guideposts for such partnerships, but such guideposts are anecdotal and often lacking in detail due to the limitations of the current evidence-base. As part of an evaluation of the Veterans Affairs Nursing Academy program of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, we sought to identify indicators of successful partnerships during the crucial first year of 15 different partnerships. We propose early, evidence-based indicators of progress toward achieving desired outcomes, and seek to provide practical, real-world detail that extends the recommendations in the AACN-AONE report.

These findings, drawn from a comparative analysis of partnership development in 15 sites from across the United States, provide insight into effective approaches for structuring and implementing academic-clinical partnerships in nursing. We conducted a qualitative analysis of 142 individual interviews and 23 focus groups with stakeholders from each of these partnerships across the nation. We emphasize five key themes: the criticality of inter-organizational collaboration; challenges arising from blending different cultures; challenges associated with recruiting nurses to take on faculty roles; the importance of structuring the partnership to promote evidence-based practice and simulation-based learning in the clinical setting; and recognizing that stable relationships must be based on long-term commitments rather than short-term changes in the demand for nursing care. This framework provides actionable guidelines for structuring and implementing effective academic-practice partnerships that support undergraduate nursing education.

Potential Peer Reviewers:
1. Judy A. Beal, D.N. Sc
   Professor and Dean of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences
2. Maura MacPhee, PhD, RN  
   Associate Professor  
   UBC School of Nursing  
   Email: Maura.MacPhee@nursing.ubc.ca

3. Teri A. Murray, PhD, APHN-BC, RN, FAAN, Associate Professor  
   Dean, School of Nursing  
   St. Louis University  
   Email: tmurray4@slu.edu

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Regards,
Aram

Aram Dobalian, PhD, JD  
Director, Veterans Emergency Management Evaluation Center (VEMEC)  
16111 Plummer Street MS-152  
North Hills, CA 91343  
Phone: (818) 891-7711, ext. 7182  
Email: aram.dobalian@va.gov

Associate Adjunct Professor  
Department of Health Policy and Management, UCLA Fielding School of Public Health  
& UCLA School of Nursing