



Developing Nursing Leaders for the Future: Achieving Competency for Transformational Leadership

Cheryl Lacasse, MS, RN, OCN®

Are today's nurses ready for the challenge of leading healthcare reform based on best practices and current evidence, ensuring safety and quality in all aspects of care, integrating principles of patient-centered care, and leading interprofessional teams while being fiscally responsible, ethical, caring, and compassionate caregivers? Although the question is complicated and multifaceted, the importance of ongoing leadership development from professional entry education to professional practice and enhancing professional practice at the bedside or in the board room must not be overlooked. Initial leadership development and ongoing education about the many dimensions of healthcare innovations are critical to providing nurses with the tools essential to fully engage in an interprofessional approach to healthcare reform (Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2010).

Leadership is defined in many different ways and has many dimensions. Strong leadership includes having a clear vision and communicating it clearly and passionately to inspire willing participants in the collaborative process of realizing the vision. It also includes providing information, knowledge, and other essential tools to all who share the vision and follow the path of achieving the vision. A leader is a visionary coach and guide with expertise in facilitating collaboration and coordinating personal, intellectual, financial, and other valuable resources while balancing the interests of multiple levels of customers and stakeholders and achieving optimal outcomes (BusinessDictionary.com, 2013). All oncology nurses are positioned in the current healthcare system to be team leaders for the comprehensive care of individuals throughout their

cancer survivorship experience. The way oncology nurses approach care also equips them with the basic tools to provide vision for patient-centered care and complex coordination of care for cancer survivors.

A report from the IOM (2010), entitled *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, recommended transformational changes in nursing education and practice, which position nurses to be a strong influence in shaping healthcare delivery systems, healthcare policy, and overall healthcare practices in the future. One specific recommendation is to prepare nurses at all levels to assume leadership positions. Several leadership competency models are in academia and practice and can be used for leadership development.

Leadership Competencies

Huston (2008) suggested a set of eight leadership competencies that are likely to be essential for nurse leaders in 2020. The group of competencies is broad but lends a different dimension to comprehensive leadership preparation for the next decade. These competencies include (a) global perspective; (b) working knowledge of technology such as the electronic health record, clinical decision supports, and critical biometrics; (c) expert decision-making skills, including the use of evidence-based practice to develop best practices for delivery of care; (d) integrating quality and safety into organizational culture; (e) wisely interacting with policies and politics in the healthcare system; (f) collaborating and building interprofessional teams and positive and productive patient care environments; (g) balancing authentic leadership and performance

expectations; and (h) being proactive in guiding change to facilitate continuous quality improvement using a visionary approach to systems transformation. These leadership competencies are similar to those described by select specialty organizations and academic guidelines for leadership development.

Basic leadership preparation is integrated into all levels of nursing preparation. The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) has incorporated key leadership competencies into its series for baccalaureate, master's, and doctor of nursing practice education, which provide guidelines for accredited nursing education programs (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2006, 2011a, 2011b). These leadership competencies include general leadership strategies, data-driven decision making, communication, conflict management, change theory, systems thinking and complexity science, healthcare systems and organizational relationships, healthcare finance, healthcare system operations, and principles of teamwork and care coordination of individuals and populations. This content is generally integrated into classroom theoretical perspectives and mentor-based academic practice at the level appropriate for the educational program and clinical experience of CCNE-accredited programs.

Practice-Related Leadership Competencies

In the practice arena, several sets of leadership competencies have been developed by practice-focused groups such as the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE), 2005, Healthcare Leadership Alliance (Stefl, 2008), National Center for Healthcare Leadership