



GUEST EDITORIAL

Dear International Colleagues,

Earlier this year, I had the privilege of participating in a discussion group with Chief Nursing Officers representing major hospitals in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. The Dean of a prominent School of Nursing in Pittsburgh led the discussion, asking the nurse leaders to identify essential subjects for inclusion in the School's new curriculum. "Safety" and "quality" were identified by one hundred per cent of the nurse leaders as absolutely necessary topics to include in undergraduate education.

Not one of us would dispute the value of teaching the concepts of safety and quality. With nursing curricula already "overloaded" with content, the challenge becomes: how can we effectively integrate quality and safety education without adding more content to programs already crammed with subject material?

I believe the solution can be found the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) Initiative. Started in 2005 with a multi-million dollar grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the goal of QSEN has been to "...address the challenge of preparing future nurses with the knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA) necessary to continuously improve the quality and safety of the healthcare systems in which they work" (www.qsen.org).

Under the leadership of Dean Linda Cronenwett of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Nursing, six QSEN competencies were defined: patient centered care, teamwork and collaboration, evidence-based practice, quality improvement, informatics and safety. For each competency, a comprehensive set of knowledge, skills and attitudes have been developed.

In 2008, my school, the University Of Pittsburgh Medical Center Shadyside School Of Nursing, was one of fifteen pilot schools selected to develop instructional methods to integrate the six QSEN competencies into our program. To date, our faculty has created many innovative teaching strategies that demonstrate how the QSEN competencies can be incorporated into a pre-licensure nursing program without adding more hours to the curriculum. The following is a partial listing of some key QSEN projects generated over the past 5 years:

- 60 Second Situational Assessment,
- human patient simulation to teach quality and safety in Mental Health Nursing,
- the Student Innovator Award,
- problem Based Learning and end of life issues.

In the United States, nurse educators and nurse executives generally agree that a "preparation- to-practice" gap is common. In other words, a gap of knowledge, skills and attitudes exists between what is taught in nursing school and what is necessary to transition into practice. Integrating QSEN competencies and KSA's as a standard in all nursing programs will effectively begin to bridge this gap. Nurse executives and leaders in nursing education agree that quality and safety education is essential for the new graduate....we are sharing a vision.

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