

Philosophy on Baccalaureate in Nursing Preparation

The vision for the Department of Nursing is that the **innovations of our staff leaders contribute to the advancement of quality care, academic excellence, and the development of new knowledge that promote health and wellness nationally.** This vision is grounded in nursing research that demonstrates a relationship among formal educational preparation of nurses, characteristics of the care environment, and patient outcomes. Evidence suggests that better patient outcomes result when a higher proportion of baccalaureate-prepared registered nurses provide care in hospitals (Aiken, Clarke, Cheung, Sloane and Silber, 2003; Estabrooks, Midodzi, Cumming, Ricker and Giovannetti, 2005). Major changes in the future health care system will require philosophical modifications in how nurses are educated. “Nursing education should serve as a platform for continued lifelong learning and include opportunities for seamless transition to higher degree programs” (Institute of Medicine Future of Nursing Report, 2011). Increasingly complex patient care needs, clinical therapeutics, and teamwork require sophisticated nursing judgment. Baccalaureate preparation in nursing, appropriate clinical expertise, and adequate staffing resources are all critical to support patient care. For this reason, the Department of Nursing is implementing the expectation that all registered nurses hired after June 30, 2011 will obtain a baccalaureate in nursing within six years of their hire date.

The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) were developed to answer some common questions. We encourage staff to talk to their Manager or Human Resources Liaison if there are specific or additional questions.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How does this expectation impact registered nurses currently working at HMC?

A: All registered staff nurses who provide direct patient care and were hired prior to June 30, 2011 will be grandfathered to their current nursing position with their current degree status; however, they will be encouraged to continue their nursing education.

Q: Does this affect nurses in leadership positions at HMC?

A: Nurses in identified leadership positions (ex: Clinical Head Nurses, Nurse Managers) have a BSN degree as a minimum qualification for this position; therefore, new hires to leadership positions will meet this prerequisite. Nurses currently in leadership positions at HMC are aware of this requirement and are working with their Directors to meet this obligation. According to the IOM Future of Nursing report, recommendation number seven states that nurses should take responsibility for their personal and professional growth by continuing their education and seeking opportunities to develop and exercise their leadership skills (Institute of Medicine Future of Nursing Report, 2011).

Q: *Is it true that only nurses with a BSN are being hired at HMC?*

A: No. The Department of Nursing and Human Resources both value and actively recruit nurses with clinical experience. Nursing research validated the importance of both formalized knowledge and experiential or skilled knowledge. The expectation of obtaining a BSN within six years of hire will further enhance the knowledge and skill of our experience new hires.

Q: *What if the new hire has a bachelor's degree in another field and an associate's degree in nursing?*

A: The expectation of obtaining a BSN within six years will still be in effect. The BSN is grounded in nursing knowledge and provides content in the areas of professionalism, leadership and management, human response to health/illness, critical thinking, and nursing practice across the lifespan. This content provides the foundation for clinical leadership at the bedside. The knowledge expectation is knowledge in the nursing discipline so we are requiring the bachelor's degree to be in nursing.

Q: *What is the plan for assisting new hires with the process?*

A: The nurse manager will review the progress toward obtaining a BSN every six months during the annual and mid-year PEP review process. Staff will provide written documentation of class progression. Program progression will be defined as measurable annual activity toward degree attainment (minimum of two courses per calendar year). Lack of demonstration of progress toward degree attainment will result in progressive disciplinary action. Extenuating circumstances will be addressed individually by Nurse Managers and Directors.

References

- Aiken, L.H., Clarke, S., Cheung, R.B., Sloane, D.M., & Silber, J.H. (2003). Educational levels of hospital nurses and surgical patient mortality. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 290, 1617-1623.
- Estabrooks, C.A., Midodzi, W., Greta, G., Ricker, K., & Giovannetti, P. (2005). The impact of hospital nursing characteristics on 30 day mortality. *Nursing Research*, 54, 74-84.
- IOM (Institute of Medicine). (2011). *The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 163-177, 283.