



Gunn: Journey to nursing excellence

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C-I contributing columnist
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Healthcare is undergoing a fundamental transformation, and nurses are in the midst of many of the changes taking place. Recognizing it is critical to engage nurses throughout the process, KershawHealth has developed our Journey to Nursing Excellence initiative, a three-pronged approach encompassing shared governance, workforce development and staff recognition.

Shared governance is a professional practice model which breaks down the old hierarchical model. All too often in the past, new programs would be implemented or changes made to policies, and nurses might have little or no involvement. Shared governance, on the other hand, creates a dynamic staff-leader partnership which promotes collaboration and shared decision making. As our Chief Nursing Officer Stacy Collier says, with shared governance, nothing happens *about* nursing which doesn't *involve* nurses. Nurses are now a part of every stage of the management process through a variety of staff councils which provide input on quality and safety, patient-centered care, documentation, nursing practice and professional development. This ground-level involvement improves staff morale, recruitment and retention, and creates a stronger, more engaged nursing staff. The ultimate end of shared governance, however, is to improve patient care, quality outcomes and patient satisfaction. That, after all, is the heart of nursing care.

Developing our nursing workforce involves several steps. First is to ensure our nurses engage in lifelong learning, which not only improves their clinical skills, but prepares them to lead the changes necessary to advance healthcare. We are actively encouraging our nurses to transition from the traditional RN degree to the baccalaureate BSN degree, and will require a BSN degree for all nurse managers beginning in 2017. And finally, we will implement nurse residency programs to enhance training and leadership skills. In pursuit of these goals and in partnership with the KershawHealth Auxiliary, our first three BSN nursing scholarship recipients -- Amy Blackmon, Kathy Clemons and Stephanie Raley -- were named in May.

Staff recognition is critical to creating a stronger nursing culture. With that in mind, KershawHealth began participating in The DAISY Award program to recognize extraordinary nurses. More than 20 nurses have been nominated for the award, and three -- Stephanie Raley, Lorraine Jeffcoat, and Lisa Creel -- have already been honored.

Healthcare is changing, and at KershawHealth we are doing everything possible to ensure that transformation leads to better patient outcomes and satisfaction. Nurses are critical to our success in this arena, and this new initiative recognizes the exceptional skills and knowledge they bring.

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