NURSING SERVICE
ANNUAL REPORT
2013

VA Salt Lake City Health Care System
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Honoring America’s Veterans with quality health care services, part of the largest integrated health care system in the U.S.
It has been my privilege to serve as the Associate Director, Patient Care Services for VA Salt Lake City Health Care System (VASLCHCS) since 2009. More than buildings and equipment, VASLCHCS is defined by the compassion, dedication, and skill of our nursing staff. VASLCHCS has a five-star quality rating based on the Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning report that compares VA facilities with each other. This demonstrates the high level of quality services that our nurses provide. Our nurses are among the best in the nation and their practice reflects the highest standards of nursing excellence. It also validates VASLCHCS’s commitment to maintaining a work environment in which nurses can thrive and their career aspirations can be achieved.

What makes VASLCHCS nurses unique? They are passionate about their practice and unwavering in their commitment to making a difference every day in the lives of Veterans and families they serve. Over the past year I have had the pleasure of getting to know many of our nursing staff through committee work, nursing functions, and clinical rounds. I have enjoyed learning from questions, comments, and advice as I make rounds in the units and clinics. This keeps me energized, focused, and nursing-sensitive. This past year I had the opportunity to serve at another VA facility. I was able to serve because we have developed our own nursing leaders to step into other roles through succession planning.

Succession planning can happen in many ways. Sometimes, current leaders identify and coach staff members who they believe have high potential to succeed in leadership. Unfortunately, this does not happen often enough in some nursing environments, which was the case at my detail station. There has never been a better time to choose nursing leadership as a career goal. The retirement of a large number of baby boomer nurse leaders will result in great career opportunities by the end of the decade. Oprah Winfrey often says that “luck is preparation meeting opportunity”. The time to start preparing for these opportunities is now. Succession planning matters and we have no time to lose. Nursing allows for so many wonderful career choices and providing growth opportunities for our nursing staff will help us retain our valuable nurses.

Looking ahead, we still have a great deal to accomplish, as identified by the feedback I have received from many of you and through the All Employee Survey results. We appreciate our nurses and thank them for their passion and commitment to our Veterans. We also thank our patients, families, and community partners for the trust they place in us to provide the very best care every day.

Shella Stovall, MNA, RN
Associate Director, Patient Care Services
VASLCHCS nurses practice and contribute to decision making through a Shared Governance model. In 2011, nurses voted and selected a counselor model structure. Previous committees and working groups were organized into five distinct councils indicating function and specialty: Advanced Practice Nurses (APN); Education; Evidence-Based Practice; Leadership; and Professional Clinical Practice. A Coordinating Council, chaired by the Associated Director for Patient Care Services, serves as the central council for communication among the councils, coordination of activities, facilitating efforts through collaboration, seeking resources, and promoting leadership support at the organizational level. Councils operate under by-laws, are chaired by staff nurses (except for Leadership), and include staff nurse liaisons from patient care areas.
Who is the largest employer of Nurses in the Nation? The VA! With 500 Nurses and Nursing Staff in Utah and over 80,000 Nurses (RN's, APN's, LPN's/LVN's and nursing assistants) nationally, the VA has become a leader in number of nursing employees as well as programs that develop and maintain employees. Some of these programs include the VA Learning Opportunities Residency (VALOR), VA Post-Baccalaureate Nurse Residency Program (PBNR), and Nurse Scholarship programs.

With the aging population of baby boomers and the increase in retirement of the current nursing workforces, the Registered Nurse workforce is the top occupation in terms of job growth through 2020. One of the VA's programs to respond to this is the VALOR program. This program gives students an opportunity to spend 400 hours between the last semester of their junior year and their senior year providing care to Veterans. VALOR has helped expose student nurses to the facility and make a seamless transition from student nurse to registered nurse. More than 50% of VALOR participants are hired as new registered nurses in the VA.

VA Salt Lake City was a pilot site for the PBNR. Since 2012, VASLC successfully managed the twelve month post-baccalaureate residency program in an effort to improve retention, decrease first year turnover, and provide adequate skill competencies to new RN's.

Post-baccalaureate programs have proven to be successful at other facilities by reducing new graduate turnover by as much as 80%. This is a nursing community effort that will benefit organizations outside of the VA.
INPATIENT PSYCHIATRIC UNIT

The VASLCHCS Inpatient Psychiatric Unit (IPU) is a treatment program that is designed to collaborate with Veterans to reduce symptoms of mental illness and improve level of functioning. Nursing staff members are beginning to use principles of patient-centered, recovery-oriented practice to help restore hope and trust. Individualized plans of care are at the core of the treatment. The goal of recovery-oriented treatment is to have patients as partners in decision making in all aspects of their care.

Nursing staff members are attending training sessions on Recovery-Oriented Care. This approach is different from traditional, psychiatric care-giving in that nurses participate in a less directive fashion. Nurses traditionally have viewed patients as individuals with needs rather than consumers with options. The recovery approach intends to instill confidence and self-reliance in Veterans.

Peer Support Specialists are Veterans who have received training and certification in helping other Veterans. Peers are now taking part in treatment by assisting on the IPU by teaching specific classes and by interacting on a one-to-one basis. The peer relationships provide a level of understanding that is comfortable and friendly. Patients on the IPU have the opportunity to learn about the Peer Support Specialist's experience in moving toward a more satisfactory lifestyle. Veterans are able to make more educated choices about their treatment options, medication and hospitalization.

AMBULATORY CARE

CC Clinic now has an Anticoagulation Pharmacist on their team and the clinic is developing improved processes for all aspects of anticoagulation care for our Veterans. There is a wider variety of drugs available for anticoagulation now and the ACC clinic is developing ways to safely incorporate these into their treatment programs.

Primary Care is still one of the busiest services and we are always challenged with finding ways to improve care and access. We are starting a new work-group to take another look at how we can become more patient-centric, patient driven, and move closer to the FACT model of care. We are well on our way! We have Shared Medical Appointments/clinics both in Blue clinic and West Valley Clinic that bring Veteran with diabetes together. The outcomes are successful.

The AMU and our oncology service now has an RN Nurse navigator along with our Cancer Care nurse coordinator to improve our overall coordinated care for our patients with many types of cancers.

One of our Women's Clinic Providers, Jamie Clinton APRN along with Pharmacy and Behavioral health support is piloting a chronic pain management clinic to improve the safety and care of our Veterans and address the National VA safety initiative to address the use of chronic narcotic pain medication use that is taking the lives of too many Veterans. The goal is to improve safety and health for Veterans by using alternative methods to decrease chronic pain and increase ones functional health status. We are all very excited to see the outcomes and share a best practice from the VASLCHCS.

Our Employee Health Nurses were extremely successful this Flu season reaching new compliance levels with the Flu vaccination program as we strive to achieve a 90% vaccination rate for VASLCHCS employees. They took to the road and had Vaccine stations all over the facility, along with new posters with staff receiving the vaccine. Next year they plan on creating more ways to attract staff to get the vaccine. As always a BIG thanks to the Blue Clinic staff for their commitment to make this Flu Vaccination year a success by staffing the Vaccine walk-in clinic for our Veterans!

Our ability to reach our rural Veterans is ever expanding with the successful Telehealth program. We have nurses assisting in all the rural clinics helping our Veterans get the care they need. Our onsite Tel- health nurses have Veterans that manage specific health care issues by use of Telehealth devices and frequent follow-up by phone. They form close relationships with these Veterans and get to know their voices really well! Our APN in Primary Care, Holly Martin and David Skalka both provide Telemedicine regularly to Veterans in Price, Utah and Elko, Nevada. They demonstrate a lot of dedication as they are on the road frequently to make their face to face visits as well.

We have APN's in all our CBHCs and Primary Care in Salt Lake City who are now specially trained in Musculoskeletal care (MSK) and can provide more advanced MSK care to the Veteran at the primary care visit eliminating some of the ‘extra’ visits to the specialty clinics.

GI LAB is having some remodeling done soon to improve the flow for the reprocessing of endoscopes. This year the 4th annual BUNS UP 5K run/walk for colon cancer awareness sponsored by the Mountain West Society for the GI nurses and Associates. Next year it is on March 29th 9am at Sugarhouse Park!
NEWS FROM THE FRONT LINES

NURSING RESEARCH

The VA Salt Lake Health Care System (VSLCHCS) as an organization continues to support and facilitate nursing research. This past year, Principal Investigator, Charlene Wein, PhD, RN was awarded a $1,180,500 grant to conduct a research study entitled, “CREATE: Cognitive Support Informatics for Nurse Medication Stewardship.” The research is funded 10/1/13 - 9/30/17.

Nicolette Estrada, PhD, RN, MAOM, FNP and Nancy Staggers, PhD, RN, FAAN are co-Principal Investigators on the research study.

Nicolette Estrada, ACNS for Research, is assigned an active role in supporting and facilitating Evidence-Based Practice (EBP). To conduct EBP, nurses utilize the best evidence (often research results) and combine with nurse expertise, patient references, and best available resources to provide quality care to our Veterans. The six RN’s participating in the VA residency program are required to complete an EBP change during their year in the program. Working in teams of two, the projects completed included Improving Catheter Care through use of Bundles; Improving Nurse-Physician Communication through Interdisciplinary Rounding; and Respiratory Care Bundles: Evidence-Based Project to Decrease Respiratory Complications.

Nursing staff through the Shared Governance EBP Council have made great strides in developing EBP process and resources. The EBP SharePoint was updated with additional materials and resources. A Pathway was developed to facilitate submission of ideas from staff for EBP changes.

CRITICAL CARE

The Emergency Department staff has been working closely with the admitting physicians to ensure the placement of ADT orders are completed within 30 minutes after the decision to admit has been made. This one task plays a large role in the admitting process and impacts patient flow/house wide. Lori Mead, RN, Utilization Manager, is now working within the ED to assist the providers in learning the InterQual criteria for admissions which will also improve our patient flow and reimbursement.

Telemetry has also been working closely with Utilization Management and has increased the number of patients who are being admitted to their unit under the title of ‘observation’ rather than admission. This has improved our bed utilization for telemetry, improved patient flow and benefits our patients in that they now have a lower co-payment.

MICU, SICU, SDS and PACU are working on the implementation of the Essentris documentation system within their areas. This system was purchased by our VHAIS and over the past few years, multiple parties have been refining the system. The goal of this product is to eliminate the current paper flow sheets and provide more consistent charting between critical care units and facilities.

Our CNO group continues to provide house supervision 24/7 and have played a key role in our Rapid Response Team. The goal of the RRT is to improve patient outcomes by responding to nursing and family concerns about acute changes in the patient’s condition and placing patients in the appropriate level of care.

We are pleased to announce the formation of an ICU float pool. Watch for details this year!

SUCCESSION PLANNING

SUCCESSION PLANNING GOES BEYOND REPLACEMENT AND JOB FILLING. IT IS ABOUT IDENTIFYING AND NURTUREING A POOL OF POTENTIAL CANDIDATES FOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS.

Our nursing department has a strong vision for organizational and leadership development. Nearly 25% of VA Salt Lake City Health Care System’s nursing staff is retirement eligible. Hiring, retaining, and developing our nurses is critical for continued excellence in patient care.

Sharing leadership is a key component of a successful succession planning strategy. Providing leadership experiences in unique contexts creates a diverse experience which can add significant value to an organization. These opportunities are provided through education and hands-on experience. Our Shared Governance Structure lends itself to providing leadership opportunities for nurses of all levels. It also serves as a vehicle for learning the administrative processes which is often a new experience for new nurses.

2013 was a great year for leadership opportunities within VSLCHCS. Sheila Stovall, our Associate Director for Patient Care Services, was assigned to a five month detail at the VA Pacific Islands Health Care System based in Honolulu, Hawaii. In her absence, other nurses were able to benefit from acting in higher leadership positions. These opportunities provide a comprehensive real-life experience that prepares nurses for new responsibilities. Michelle Bird, Nurse Manager for Specialty Clinics served as the Acting ACNS for Ambulatory Care and Eileen Carzonetti, ACNS for Ambulatory Care served as the Acting Associate Director for Patient Care Services.

Providing opportunities to as many nurses as possible is key to creating a pool of competent nurse leaders. We strongly encourage participation in committees, councils, and duties outside their scope or regular nursing duties for individual development.

ACCEPTING NEW CHALLENGES AND TAKING ON NEW ROLES IS A GREAT WAY TO LEARN NEW THINGS AND GAIN EXPERIENCE.

Michelle Bird, RN
Nurse Manager, Specialty Clinics

Eileen Carzonetti, MSN, RN
ACNS, Ambulatory Care

IT’S A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE. LEARNING TO BE A LEADER IS IMPORTANT. leaning to take on new challenges.

DIDATES FOR LEADERSHIP IDENTIFYING AND NURTURING A POOL OF POTENTIAL CANDIDATES FOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS.

PERSUING NEW ROLES PROVIDES A  COMPREHENSIVE REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCE THAT PREPARES NURSES FOR NEW RESPONSIBILITIES.

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AT A GLANCE

Every year VA Salt Lake City Health Care System actively looks for ways to increase access for Veterans. Increasing access usually means increasing resources. In order to meet demand we have increased our total staff size by 9% and have added over 11% to our total medical care annual budget.

2013 Unique Patients: 51,738
Unique patient increase: 3.2%

2013 Outpatient Visits: 636,197
2013 Bed Days of Care: 33,486

2013 Average Daily Census: 92

2013 Total FTEE: 1,876.4 Total FTEE increase from 2012: 9%

2013 Budget: $403,727,775 Total medical care budget increase from 2012: 11%

Education is the key to success
VA Salt Lake City Health Care System Nursing has an academic affiliation with the University of Utah, Westminster College, Salt Lake Community College, and Brigham Young University. Education is the foundation of an effective healthcare provider. VA nurses are encouraged to pursue advanced degrees and are supported through a series of scholarships, grants, and tuition waiver opportunities.

NURSING STAFF
EDUCATION DEMOGRAPHICS

47% BSN or non-Nursing Bachelor’s Degree
10% MSN or non-Nursing Master’s Degree
16% Associates Degree
16% High School or some college
4% PhD

TYPE OF LEAVE HOURS USED

Administrative Leave 4.7%
Comp Time 5.3%
Leave Without Pay 12.1%
Sick Leave 25.2%
Annual Leave 52.6%

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OVERTIME HOURS

15,827 Hours Used
$715,854 Overtime Cost

VA SLCHCS