



CREATIVE  
HEALTH CARE  
MANAGEMENT

# CHCM News

*Transforming Care. Strengthening Results*

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Creating a  
caring  
environment  
is an  
important  
element of  
successful  
organizations.

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## Healthy Climate, Healthy Nurses, Healthy Patients

Sue Ellen Pinkerton and Sharon K. Dingman

Recently an e-mail was circulated with some jokes about nursing. After reading a few the tones and the "hidden" intent became distressing. Some of the jokes were: "Nurses believe not all patients are annoying...some are unconscious..." and "Did you hear about the nurse who died and went straight to hell? It took her two weeks to realize she wasn't at work anymore."

Compare these jokes to some cartoons from *Is there a nurse in the house?* (Nursing Spectrum, 1992): Two children approach a woman, one child is crying and the other child says, "C'mon, you need professional attention. Let my mom take a look at it...she's a NURSE," and a pediatric patient using a stethoscope on a nurse with another nurse saying to her colleague "I guess it really is never too early to start recruiting," and a picture of a nurse being carried through a crowd of cheering people with a band following and flower petals being scattered before her and a person in the crowd saying "At this hospital, Nurses' Week is not taken lightly."

What has happened to nursing? How did we go from the proud profession before the 1990's, when we thought everyone should be a nurse, to a profession where work is hell and patients

are annoying? Was it the 90's when we downsized and right sized and merged and focused on the bottom line at the expense of healthy work climates, healthy nurses and healthy outcomes for patients? Has all of this lead to intolerable work conditions and a reluctance to invest in nursing? How do we reclaim our passion and our love of a profession that has done so much for the health of generations? Have we lost the art of nursing care? More importantly, how do we keep nursing's covenant with society?

One way to initiate change is through leadership. Investing in leadership development at all levels of an organization is worth the outcome. With deliberate, focused leadership development members of an organization speak the same leadership language, clearly articulate shared expectations and understand the meaning of responsibility, authority and accountability (Creative Health Care Management, 2002).

Creating an environment where employees are excited about their work, are willing to learn, view their work from multiple perspectives and can adjust quickly to change is the challenge of transformational leaders.

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## An LPN Tip Sheet

Marie Manthey

Talk about history repeating itself! At a recent nursing conference, I was inundated (during a care delivery speech) with questions about use of LPNs. This topic seems to be on everyone's mind now that the shortage of RNs is really upon us. I have long felt if I were running a nursing department today, I would strengthen the LPN skill mix, do everything possible to create the continuity needed for effective pairing or partnering of experienced RNs with an LPN, and concentrate on freeing the RN to do the highest level of nursing: engaging in a therapeutic relationship with a small caseload of patients whose care she accepts responsibility for, coordinating that care, including discharge preparation, over time.

This tip sheet is intended to summarize years of experience with the issue of skill mix and professional practice.

Use of LPNs and Nursing Assistants in direct care need not diminish nor dilute the strength of professional practice on an inpatient unit. In fact, during the introduction of a new skill mix, the role of the RN as planner and coordinator of care can, and should, be strengthened.

Patient care assignments should always be to the RN. The RN delegates appropriate work to the support staff. For this to work for everyone (but especially for the RN), there needs to be enough continuity of assignments and schedules for effective delegation to occur.

The RN is responsible for the judgment used in deciding what to delegate. The RN is not accountable for the actual care given, but rather for the quality of the judgment used in deciding what to delegate.\*

RN knowledge of and confidence in the abilities and competence of the support staff can only be achieved when there is time spent working together. Therefore, we strongly recommend the concept of pairing (a 1:1 relationship on a shift) or partnering

(where two people agree to work the same schedule over an extended period of time and are assigned consistently to work together. (See: Manthey, M. (1989). Practice partnerships: the newest concept in care delivery. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 19:2. and Manthey, M. (1988). Primary practice partners: a nurse extender system. *Nursing Management*, 19:3)

The best utilization of support staff comes when the support person can perform up to 75 % (by volume of work) of the RN's workload. When this is the case, care assignments will permit the RN to assign many of her higher level technical tasks to a highly skilled LPN, freeing her to attend to the emotional needs of patients, to listen to their concerns, those concerns into account in planning care, communicate with key members of the health care team and generally provide the oversight and coordination of care so dangerously absent for many patients in today's fast moving system.

Develop a reasonable 'stepping stone program' on site to facilitate the transition from LPN to RN. I think LPNs are one of the richest sources of future RNs there is.

Break out of the value system that says RNs and better than LPNs (and its corollary...MDs are better than RNs!). This is one of the biggest challenges we face as this skill mix change evolves. When we break the cycle and come to believe that everyone deserves equal respect as human beings (albeit with different skills/salaries/etc) we will be able to lead a much more effective multi-skilled workforce.

We need to stop treating LPNs as second class citizens. ■

\* Creative Health Care Resources offers two video tapes on delegation: Donna Wright's *How to Delegate without Losing your Friends, your Job, or your License* and Kathleen Flynn Peterson's *Liability Issues in Nursing: A Focus on Delegation*. Call 800.264.3246 for more information

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Many facilities are pursuing Magnet recognition (American Nurses Credentialing Center Magnet Recognition Program, 2002). By successfully meeting the Scope and Standards for Nurse Administrators for Magnet recognition (American Nurses Association, 1995), organizations create an infrastructure that supports a healthy work environment and healthy nurses and healthy patients are the outcomes. Nurses make a critical difference in healthcare systems. Practice environments are built upon healthy relationships among nurses, physicians and other healthcare professionals, and patients/families and communities.

Creating a caring environment is an important element of successful organizations. Caring for the caregiver involves being present for them. In other words, a healthy climate is created by speaking up for the caregivers, by anticipating their needs, and employing all senses, similar to what a caregiver would do for a patient. This creates alignment by having the caring flow from administration, to the nurses, to the patients and back again (Koloroutis, 2002).

Relationship based and patient centered care delivery models encourage professional autonomy and decision making. The caring behaviors of nurses significantly impact patient satisfaction. The integration of caring knowledge and skills are the value-added components of the patient's caring experience. What matters most to patients and families are the interpersonal skills of their caregivers, especially the nurse (Dingman, 2002).

Who are the leaders? Anyone in the service of another human being....those who will listen with care, who cultivate conditions for change in their environments, who work together to stop fragmentation, who come together in conversation about what they most care about, are those who care (Wheatley, 2002). We are the leaders; we can change the climate so the value of nursing is recognized and appreciated from every venue. ■

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## Jayne Felgen Receives AONE Community Partnership Award

Jayne Felgen, president of Creative Health Care Management, has been awarded the Community Partnership Award by the American Organization of Nurse Executives. The Community Partnership award is the most prestigious award given to an AONE member.

Jayne is being honored for being a leader in health-care and the community, enhancing the image of nursing, fostering involvement in public affairs, and forming strategic relationships and partnerships within the community. ■