**Nurse Care Manager Workforce Development Through an Academic-Practice Partnership**

Formal research on nursing care coordination has grown over the past decade and initial findings show utilization and cost reductions, higher quality of care, and improved clinical outcomes (ANA, 2012). Given these positive findings, the Care Transformation Collaborative (CTC) and Rhode Island College School of Nursing (RIC) have made an investment in Nurse Care Manager (NCM) workforce development.

 In 2013, the CTC assessed the learning needs of NCMs working in Patient-Centered Medical Homes, and then collaborated with RIC nursing faculty to develop a plan to meet these learning needs. In 2014, guided by stakeholder needs and professional standards, a new NCM Graduate Certificate Program was developed, including courses in: 1.) nursing care management, 2) healthcare systems, 3) professional role development, 4) public health sciences, and 5) epidemiology.

To model inter-professional practice, the foundational NCM course was co-taught by a population health nursing professor and a nurse/social worker currently practicing care management. The NCM course was designed to contain content that supported students in passing national certification exams in case management. In addition, students who completed the NCM Graduate Certificate Program could seamlessly transition into the Masters program in Population/Public Health Nursing at RIC.

Since the start of the program, 13 students have been accepted into the NCM program at RIC. Seven of the 13 students have decided to also earn their Master’s degree in the Population/Public Health Nursing. Three additional graduate students have been accepted into the NCM Program for the fall of 2016.

According to student surveys; benefits to students who completed this program included clarifying roles and responsibilities, building knowledge and skills for practice, gaining recognition through national certification in case management, and being able to articulate their value to the rest of the healthcare team. With this level of student success, the CTC and RIC have learned that academic-practice partnerships can be mutually beneficial indeed!

References

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