


Perceived Leadership Qualities of Public Health Nursing Leaders: Challenges in Advancing Public Health Nursing

David J. Reyes, MN, MPH, RN, School of Nursing, University of Washington, Seattle, WA

Betsy Bekemeier, PhD, MPH, RN, FAAN, School of Nursing, University of Washington, Seattle, WA

L. Michele Issel, PhD RN, School of Public Health, University of Illinois-Chicago, Chicago, IL

November 2, 2011 APHA 139th Annual Meeting, Washington, DC




Presenter Disclosures

David J Reyes, MN, MPH, RN

The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

"No relationships to disclose"

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Objectives:

1. Define accountable PHN practice.
2. Identify challenges faced by public health nursing leaders to advance public health nursing.
3. Describe elements of influential public health nursing leadership.

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KRISP Project Aim:

- "...enhance the DONs' and PHNs' competencies related to quality improvement and leadership."

Study Purpose:

- To Ascertain Perceptions and Challenges of Effective Leadership for Directors of Nursing in Local Health Departments.

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Study Participants

A Purposive Sample of Seven Directors Of Nursing in Six Local Health Departments in Two States

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Methodology

An exploratory approach using semi-structured interview techniques was employed to identify salient patterns and themes associated with qualities of effective leadership.

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Analysis

Inductive methods, supported by ATLAS.ti™, were used to identify major codes, categories and themes focusing on DONs' role in supporting and leading nurses, their self-described leadership characteristics and qualities, perceived barriers to their effective leadership, and strategies used to lead change.

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Study Findings

Five Major Themes Emerged:

- Accountable PHN Practice
- Co-existent Accountabilities
- Effectiveness Barriers
- Influential Leadership
- Life-long Learning

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Accountable Public Health Nursing Practice

ADVOCACY –

“I hope that public health nurses feel valued by me and feel that I'm an advocate for public health nursing and advocating for their sort of advanced training..., even at the state level, for expansion of public health nursing practice.”

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Accountable Public Health Nursing Practice

ARTICULATE –

“I really do believe public health nursing is at a crossroads and I think that it's really important that the educators and the leaders of public health nursing begin to articulate what that new vision for public health nursing might be and not be afraid of it.”

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CHANGE LEADERSHIP –

“You know no matter what happens with resources, there's always gonna be change. There's always gonna be an opportunity for leadership...we're gonna be heading towards real opportunity for leadership no matter what here...I think not being afraid of change yourself especially you know when there's big change.”

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PRACTICE COMPETENCY –

“...I think in public health leadership involves understanding public health science, social sciences, you have to know how to read and understand research, how to evaluate whether it applies to your practice, evaluate [sic], program evaluation is important. There's a lot finance stuff, budgeting, and then supervisory or management skills...”

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POPULATION-FOCUSED CARE PROMOTION –

“I’m working to help my own team adjust to this new population level focus it’s not just an issue of them learning and getting used to a change like any change would be, but they feel like they have so much other things to do that they don’t really have time for this.”

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Leadership Effectiveness Barriers

- Organizational/System Level
- Practice Level
- Individual DON Level

“...if you’re in an organizational structure that doesn’t allow flexibility and creativity it really significantly limits what you can do within that structure.”

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Influential Leadership

STRATEGIC THINKER –

“So really having strategic methods and plans and ways of empowering...is probably one of the biggest ways that I can help the nurses find satisfaction.”

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Influential Leadership

TRUST BUILDER –

“I think that you have to have open communication and trust with the nursing staff, and I think if you have that as a basic foundation then they may not always agree with the direction that you’re going but they’ll at least give you the benefit of the doubt and support it.”

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Influential Leadership

VISIONARY –

“I think then it’s really important to communicate the further vision of where you’re going with changes and the importance of why do you need to make these changes.”

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IMPLICATIONS

Opportunities exist to identify leadership gaps and to identify strategies to further develop public health nurses as effective leaders and contributors toward advancing public health nursing practice and improving population health outcomes.

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CONCLUSION

DONs' capacity for effective public health leadership is constrained by individual, practice, and system and organizational barriers.

"...the way that I'm working to demonstrate this is to help, you know, folks on the journey of learning more about population health, supporting that growth, making myself available as a resource so as they are navigating this new system and this new learning process...to find their best way."

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"In order to ensure that nurses are ready to assume leadership roles, nursing education programs need to embed leadership-related competencies throughout. In addition, leadership development and mentoring programs need to be made available for nurses at all levels, and a culture that promotes and values leadership needs to be fostered. All nurses must take responsibility for their personal and professional growth by developing leadership competencies and exercising these competencies across all care settings."

- *Future of Nursing Report, IOM, 2010*

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Funded by HRSA Bureau of Health
Profession, Division of Nursing, under
the Nurse Education, Practice &
Retention Program, grant number
D11HP14605

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