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Educating nurse leaders who will drive innovation and practice improvement

Susan Gledhill

Australian Catholic University, Australia

Nurse leaders are required to inspire and lead their staff and guide them through an often challenging process of questioning, exploring possibilities, driving fresh ways of thinking, taking risks and collaborating with others, including consumers. Successful change management for practice improvement requires “a systematic approach towards testing new ideas and innovation which are often based on the expectations of users of the service, as well as on prevailing socio-economic circumstances and policies”. Innovation for practice improvement is not a new phenomenon and history demonstrates the significant effect that a health practitioner can have, not only on improving practice and driving innovation, but also in demonstrating effective leadership skills. Contemporary challenges, and opportunities, for nurse leaders include integrated health care, regulatory factors, consumer expectations, building coalitions, workforce diversity and safety and quality improvement initiatives. The question is therefore, what are the current challenges in educating potential nurse leaders who will model good governance, lead practice improvement and drive sustainable change? Innovative educational strategies that will be discussed include broad-based curriculum with exposure to multidisciplinary peer groups, supporting content delivery with technology, basing content on contemporary real-world situations and consolidating a ‘systems thinking’ approach to leadership.

Biography

Susan Gledhill is a Registered Nurse, Registered Midwife and Academic. Her current position is Senior Lecturer and Postgraduate Course Coordinator in the School of Nursing, Midwifery & Paramedicine at the Australian Catholic University (Brisbane Campus) where she has responsibility for postgraduate course coordination, strategic involvement in curriculum development and working in close collaboration with industry partners. She lectures in postgraduate units that include ‘Leadership in Health Care’ and ‘Quality and Safety in Health Care’, among others. Her professional experience includes ten years of nurse management, research in the areas of healthy ageing, pain management and dementia and prostate cancer research. Her professional experience also includes policy development and research with the Queensland Nursing Council and Health Practitioner Regulation with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

Sue.Gledhill@acu.edu.au

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