

ACEN Perspective

Nursing: A Progressive Art

Susan VanDeVelde-Coke, RN, MA, MBA, PhD

Executive Vice President, Chief Health Professions & Nursing Executive

Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Toronto, ON

President, Academy of Canadian Executive Nurses

With this issue, the *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* introduces a section that will publish new ideas on leadership development. Two papers are presented here, one reviewing lessons learned over 10 years from one national leadership program, the other, the outcomes of a leadership summit event that occurred this past summer.

Simpson, Skelton Green and Scott, the facilitators of the Dorothy Wylie Nursing and Health Leaders Institute, describe their learnings and insights over the past decade. Their solid review of the leadership literature explains what has changed in leadership theory, the broadening of required leadership components and the necessity to use new technologies in leadership education. The institute's course content over the past 10 years emphasizes the importance of the increasingly complex environment in which leaders work, the identification of new facets of leadership components, such as emotional intelligence, and the growing understanding of the meaning of transformational leadership. Other additions to leadership education have included the importance of individual self-development (Kouzes and Posner 2010), as well as new frameworks of leadership competencies, such as LEADS in a Caring Environment (CHLN 2010).

The facilitators' insights of the past 10 years reveal the importance of leaders' taking responsibility for their individual learning and development, as well as reflecting on their learning; the criticality of the organizations' participation by supporting and challenging their leaders during the program; and finally, the institute's provision of an experiential approach to bridge theory and real-world learning opportunities. The analysis of the past decade stresses the importance

of informal and formal ongoing education of nurse leaders, a point emphasized recently in other *CJNL* papers on leadership development (Cummings 2011; Shamian 2010).

The second paper describes the results of a recent summit for nurse leaders and executives that focused on trends and issues facing the nursing profession and healthcare generally, and what future nurse leaders are looking for in their profession. The summit drew a number of conclusions, including the notion that emerging nurse leaders ask current leaders to support innovation, incorporate technology into nurses' practice and education, and improve opportunities in the workplace for professional development. In addition, the open sessions of the summit emphasized the need to support nurse leaders and executives so that they understand, debate and formulate suggestions about how to change and improve the collaborative functions of the healthcare sectors.

This summit exemplifies one of the basic, sentinel principles that formed the Academy of Canadian Nurse Executives (ACEN): the importance of networking for nurse leaders and executives. ACEN applauds the organizers for facilitating the summit, and we look forward to expanding this networking opportunity to other nurse leaders and executives across the country.

Nurse leaders work in an extremely challenging environment, one in which our basic and advanced education, though important, requires additional opportunities throughout our career to grow and advance our leadership knowledge, experience and abilities. Florence Nightingale stated: "Nursing is a progressive art, in which to stand still is to go back. ... Progress can never end" (Hansten and Washburn 1990). The Dorothy Wylie Nursing and Health Leaders Institute and the recent National Nursing Executives Summit are two examples that provide nurse leaders those opportunities.

References

- Canadian Healthcare Leadership Network (CHLN). 2010. *LEADS in a Caring Environment Framework*. Retrieved August 21, 2011. <<http://www.chlnet.ca/leads-caring-environment-framework>>.
- Cummings, G. 2011. "The Call for Leadership to Influence Patient Outcomes." *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* 24(2): 22–25.
- Hansten, R. and M. Washburn. 1990. *I Light the Lamp*. Vancouver, WA: Applied Therapeutics.
- Kouzes, J. and B. Posner. 2010. *The Truth about Leadership*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Shamian, J. 2010. "Clinician Executives: A New Breed of Leader." *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* 23(4): 22–27.