Background

With the advent of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommendations and the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) core competencies, patient safety is now a primary concern in healthcare. The incorporation of a career pathway project is aimed at helping the registered nurse students implement evidence-based patient care in their own workplace environment using a quality improvement focus. The two-course sequence allows the registered nurse student to identify a concern in her/his healthcare facility, then individualize a project which will benefit both her/his personal growth as a professional registered nurse and positively impact their patients.

The question became: What is the impact on patient outcomes of a project aimed at quality improvement in a cohort of registered nurse students in an RN-BSN program?

Course Design

Career Pathway I: Assessment and Development

This first course introduces the RN-BSN student to the career pathway project. The aim of this course is to identify a clinical pathway project in conjunction with the course faculty and workplace supervisor, define its scope, and complete the literature review for the project. The outcome is a prospectus which outlines the project.

Career Pathway II: Expanding Horizons

The second course allows for the student to implement, creatively communicate the knowledge to others and critique the project as outlined in Clinical Pathway I within the context of the RN-BSN student’s healthcare setting. The outcome of this course includes an e-poster.

Career Pathway Projects

Projects cover a range of topics and audiences, including staff education, patient education, and policy changes.

- Staff education and policy change to decrease CAUTIs
- Bedside triage in the Emergency Department
- Patient Education to decrease postsurgical wound infections
- Orientation for new RNs

Commentary

- The career pathway courses present students the opportunity to explore topics that meet QSEN competencies and promote safer patient outcomes.
- The completed projects cover a wide range of topics, are evidence-based and have demonstrated a direct impact on patient outcomes.
- The facilities where the various projects were completed include both major medical centers, smaller community hospitals and community-based clinics.
- The students comment on the positive experiences and real-life quality improvement outcomes they find.