Precepting in Nursing: Developing an Effective Workforce

Reviewed by Linda Bell, RN, MSN

Precepting in Nursing by Ullrich and Haffer previously appeared as a CD-ROM product providing computer-based learning with some interactivity and many downloadable forms. This volume of 10 chapters and 3 appendices takes the new preceptor, as the learner, through the process of developing the next employee or generation of employees for providing patient care. It focuses on the growth of the preceptor as well as that of the developing preceptee. The early chapters focus on defining the roles and responsibilities of the preceptor and the preceptee and considering the legal considerations while fostering the growth of the learner. The middle chapters describe the early phase of preceptor/preceptee interaction, including content in areas that are historically difficult for the new nurse in any role to incorporate, such as time management and learning style versus teaching style. The final chapters address the issues of motivation, diversity, and assessment of progress. These are important issues in moving preceptees through their orientation while integrating them into the work environment and providing a positive experience for everyone.

The chapter dealing with maintaining motivation emphasizes the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses’ Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments as a strategy for providing a safe learning environment. Chapter 10 provides a good overview of issues that may come up for the preceptor with potential solutions as well as encouraging self-evaluation and reflection by the preceptor.

Resources for preceptors are few and far between. Joann Grif Alspach’s products (Preceptor Instructor’s Manual: From Staff Nurse to Preceptor and Preceptor Handbook: From Staff Nurse to Preceptor) were updated in 2000 and have been the primary resource for nurses in critical care. Precepting in Nursing includes updated references and additional material not available in Alspach’s editions.

The area of content most notably missing in Precepting in Nursing is the role of the preceptor in providing for patient safety during the preceptee’s learning. There should have been at least a paragraph or section devoted to this topic; patient safety is not even listed in the index. With the strong environmental focus on patient safety the preceptor must always be aware of this responsibility.

Although this book provides an introduction and objectives and questions to guide your learning at the beginning of every chapter, the content has direct application to the current health care environment and the role of preceptor. This book would be of value to anyone taking on the role of preceptor across the continuum of care, including the advanced practice roles. Additional information in the form of Appendix A, which provides answers to the learning questions, is extremely helpful. Each chapter includes forms that can be used or adapted based on the needs of the learners and/or institution using this book.

True to the discussion of learning styles in the text, this book provides content to those who learn best by reading and having a ready reference as opposed to those who might prefer an interactive, online format such as that recently released by AACN (The Preceptor Challenge: The AACN Preceptor Development Program). Having multiple resources available in the hospital or on the unit for those who take on the role of preceptor is of value; this book would definitely meet a need.

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In the 1990s, the Respiratory Nursing Society determined that a Core Curriculum needed to be established. This book provides the basis and direction for clinicians who give direct clinical care, creates a foundation for development of staff education and curricula development, serves as a resource for evaluation of respiratory nursing practice, and provides the basis for development of certification process. It includes relevant information ranging from common respiratory diseases and pediatric-specific disorders to therapeutic modalities and even legal and ethical issues.

Global nursing impacts health care delivery in every corner of the world and requires interventions from all sectors of society. Success as a global leader requires a global mind-set, an appreciation of humanities and culture, a sensitivity to diverse human capital, and a sense of shared leadership and accountability. This book offers a global perspective on education, process, and practice initiatives. It provides a forum for recognized nurse leaders and activists to share their stories and successes in defining nursing’s past, present, and future.