

NONPF

Use of Nurse Scientists as Mentor for Doctorate of Nursing Practice Students

Abstract

Mentoring is a cornerstone activity among nurse scientists throughout their careers. Developing the research skills of nurses who are enrolled in doctoral nurse practice (DNP) programs is a trusted, responsibility of selected senior nurse research mentors. An especially important responsibility is to provide mentorship to future practice-oriented DNP nursing investigators in all the essential steps of planning and conducting responsible research. Guidance from an experienced research mentor is the best means of ensuring that the integrity of science will be protected by future DNP nurse investigators. Strategies and methodologies for providing traditional one-on-one mentoring are not well documented, and the outcomes of these experiences are largely dependent on chance pairings of well-suited mentors and mentees. To promote commitment to the next generation of DNP investigators, we will describe specific mentoring strategies used to foster the development of research skills by two DNP nursing students.

Specific strategies used by a senior nursing research mentor to guide students during the initial development of their individual DNP projects will be described. Mentorship is critical to nurture early DNP students in how to establish networks of specific clinical colleagues who support the DNP students' proposal and in successful recruitment and retention of eligible patients and/or family members. Therefore, a discussion will focus on pairing DNP students with a senior research mentor to foster a helpful feedback-oriented environment during the planning and implementation of the DNP project. Strategies will be described that the mentor used to guide the DNP students through the initial steps to establish connections with key leaders in their clinical setting and to initiate discussions about the DNP students' proposal idea and access to target patient populations. Also, the lessons learned by the research mentor about successful recruitment and retention of eligible patients will be described, including potential barriers and factors related to gaining access to target patient populations in the clinical setting.

Essential research expertise shared by the senior nurse research mentor with the DNP students will be reviewed: (a) planning the research project (e.g., study aims and research questions, design features, methodology, valid instruments, demographic forms, data-base options and internal review board (IRB) documents; (b) connecting with gate keepers of patient access in the clinical setting for the proposed DNP project; (c) completing human subjects tests for the system IRB requirements; (d) navigating the system to obtain letters of support to submit forms for IRB review; and (e) vigilant adhering to ethical principles.

Lastly, important factors will be described about the fit between the DNP student and the senior nurse research mentor. Emphasized will be the importance of selecting a mentor with an established program of external-funded research and track record of dissemination outcomes. Also described will be the importance of a communication contract between the DNP student and the mentor, including: (a) establishing a contract of expectations by the senior mentor, (b)

reaching a communication plan between the mentor and DNP student, and (c) planning an agreed-upon time-line of the DNP students' research outcomes.