

Continuing the Creativity and Connections: The Massachusetts Initiative to Update the Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies

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Abstract

AIM This article describes the collaborative effort of nursing education and practice to update the Massachusetts Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies.

BACKGROUND The Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies were published in 2010. With the establishment of the Massachusetts Action Coalition, a primary goal was to continue to promote the integration of these competencies into all education and practice settings throughout Massachusetts and share this process with other states.

METHOD Through an updated literature review and consultation with subject matter experts, the Nurse of the Future Competency Committee developed a process to ensure that significant practice advances were reflected in each of the competencies.

RESULTS The updated Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies were published in March 2016.

CONCLUSION The updated competencies capture the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed for all nurses to create a culture of health across the continuum of health care.

KEY WORDS Competencies – Future of Nursing – Culture of Health – Care Transitions

In 2006, through a collaborative effort of nursing education and practice leaders, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education established the Nurse of the Future Competency Committee to create a seamless progression through all levels of nursing education. This progression model was based on consensus competencies and included an approach to transitioning nurses into practice settings (Board of Higher Education and

Massachusetts Organization of Nurse Executives, 2006). Following four years of research and collaboration, the Nurse of the Future Competency Committee published the Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies in 2010. These competencies expanded on the Institute of Medicine (IOM) core competencies for all health care professions and the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses competencies to define expectations for all professional nurses (Sroczyński, Gravlin, Seymour-Route, Hoffart, & Creelman, 2011). The competencies were also designed to be integrated into new models for seamless academic progression and transition into nursing practice programs.

Academic institutions and health care practice sites across the state and the country have moved forward with a commitment to academic progression in response to the IOM's (2011) *Future of Nursing* report and the need to provide a more highly educated nursing workforce to meet future health care demands. The Massachusetts Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies have served as the foundation of many state models for academic progression (Sroczyński, 2011).

During any competency development or innovation process, the final stage is the evaluation and updating of the competencies (Sroczyński, 2011). In 2011, the Massachusetts Action Coalition (MAAC) was designated as an official action coalition by the Future of Nursing Campaign for Action. A primary goal of the MAAC was to continue to promote the integration of the Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies into all education and practice settings throughout Massachusetts. As part of this process, the competencies were showcased at numerous meetings and presentations across the state and the country.

In response to feedback from practice leaders involved in these meetings, the Nurse of the Future Competency Committee initiated

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a process for review and updating of the 2010 version of the competencies. This process focused on the need to ensure that the competencies reflected the many changes that have occurred in the health care environment and nursing practice over the past six years. As the committee listened to and reviewed all the input from stakeholders, common themes were identified that became the drivers for the updating process. These themes included the following:

- the need to focus on the continuum of care and care transitions;
- the need for knowledge of reimbursement challenges;
- the need to integrate population health and a culture of health into all nursing practice;
- the increasing need to promote diversity across the spectrum of health care;
- the rapid changes and the need to embrace informatics and technology among all health care professionals and organizations; and
- the increased focus on interprofessional competencies, collaboration, and teamwork.

With these drivers serving as a framework, the Nurse of the Future Competency Committee began a rigorous process for updating the 2010 publication.

UPDATING PROCESS

The updating process began with an expansion of the Nurse of Future Competency Committee to encompass more diverse representation of education and practice. These representatives joined with other members who had been involved in the original competency publication. With the earlier committee having a predominance of education representatives, conscious attention was paid to the balance of education and practice representatives in the expansion of the

committee. Attention was also paid to the inclusion of varied generational, cultural, and cross-continuum of care representatives.

The inclusion of these new representatives was focused on broadening the perspectives on the committee and increasing the value of the updated competencies to a variety of audiences and settings. The expanded committee established four teams, each of which used an evidence-based approach to review two to three assigned competencies. The teams were self-identified based on the knowledge and expertise of committee members. The groupings of two to three competencies assigned to the teams were based on the overall expertise within the teams.

After completing an updated literature and standards review, drafts of the revised competencies were shared by each team with the full Nurse of the Future Competency Committee membership for discussion and editing. Several of the teams also used subject matter experts to contribute to the revision process. These subject matter experts were individuals recognized within their organizations and/or nationally for their expertise and experience in the knowledge, attitudes, and skills within the competencies. All of the competencies were fully reviewed and updated, and the Informatics and Technology competency was completely revised.

Over the course of two years, the teams also focused on development of a shared understanding of diversity to strengthen the language used throughout the competency document. Diversity was defined as a conduit for recognizing individuality and differences along the spectrum of race, values, beliefs, choices, and culture and differences from one's own experiences. The concept of diversity was also understood to include active observation and exploration of its many facets within a safe environment, along with a set of conscious practices that require consideration of all nursing practice and care to

Table 1: Update to the Massachusetts Initiative to Update the Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies

Competency	Key Updates
Patient-centered care	Added care transitions, diversity of human condition, and impact of socioeconomic, culture, race, spiritual beliefs, gender identification, age, sexual orientation, and lifestyle
Professionalism	Included clinical reasoning, goals of health, and self-renewal of the health care provider
Leadership	Included the leadership framework from the Institute of Medicine's <i>Future of Nursing</i> report, added health policy and complexity of health care
Systems-based practice	Included cost-effective care, care transitions, and global health
Communication	Added the use of electronic communication, care transitions, conflict resolution with negotiation, deescalation techniques, and patient confidentiality
Teamwork and collaboration	Aligned with Interprofessional Education Collaborative (2011) competencies Added self-awareness, diversity, care transitions, decrease in authority gradient, strategies to deal with lateral violence
Safety	Added participation in safety surveys, the four elements supporting the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (2015) safety initiative and high reliability organizations
Quality improvement	Focused on population-based health, variation and measurement, and care of diverse populations
Evidence-based practice	Added nurses' role in the development of clinical questions for potential research and Guidelines of Human Subject Protection

achieve a culture of health and deliver culturally congruent care that is fluid, respectful, and individual (Jeffries, 2010). Using this definition, the teams strived to engrain the concept of diversity throughout the competencies.

The full committee also reviewed the set of assumptions that served as the foundation of the competencies. With a focus on changes and trends emerging in the current health care environment and with a vision to the future of nursing practice based on both observation and experience of the committee members, the set of assumptions was broadened to include interprofessional collaboration, recognition of the social determinants of health, disease prevention, and a culture of health.

Upon completion of the competency updating process, another MAAC committee focused on updating the Competency Toolkit (MAAC Future of Nursing, 2017), originally developed to support the 2010 competency document. The toolkit provides examples of the application of competencies in both education and practice settings to further detail the major updates are noted in Table 1.

REVISION OF THE INFORMATICS AND TECHNOLOGY COMPETENCY

The chair of the Organization of Nurse Leaders Informatics subcommittee was invited to join this competency revision effort. The Organization of Nurse Leaders subcommittee consists of a dedicated group of nursing informatics leaders who have worked together since 2008 to maintain a finger on the pulse of this evolving segment of the health care industry. The subcommittee worked with representatives of the Nurse of the Future Competency team assigned the informatics competency and was instrumental in revision of the competency.

The group aligned its work within an evidence-based framework, starting with a review of the skills noted in the competencies, followed by knowledge and then attitudes (American Nurses Association, 2015). As a guiding principle, the team used the IOM's (2011) *Future of Nursing* report, which focused on the growing complexity of care, requiring nurses to use advanced technology to both analyze and synthesize information in order to make critical decisions. In order to move beyond expert opinion and build higher levels of research evidence, the team reviewed the literature and did an environmental scan. It then used the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's (2008) *Essentials of Baccalaureate Education* to develop a crosswalk from the previous competency document and validate the revisions to meet today's best education standards.

The group held to an aggressive timeline to meet key milestones, while seeking feedback and guidance from multiple stakeholders. This process led to the development of a new definition for the competency as follows: "The Nurse of the Future will be able to use advanced technology, to analyze as well as synthesize information and collaborate with other professionals in order to make critical decisions that optimize patient outcomes" (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). All references for this work and all competency updates were noted in an updated reference list for the document.

SPREADING THE WORD

The MAAC held its second annual workforce summit in the fall of 2015 to share the updated Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies (Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Nursing Initiative, 2017) with statewide stakeholders. These stakeholders

included nurse educators and representatives of nursing practice across the continuum of care: community health centers and other community groups, interprofessional collaborative teams, public health nurses, school nurses, and nursing professional organizations. The focus of the meeting was to have a dialogue about the culture of health activities across the state and seek additional feedback on the content and potential utilization of the competencies.

The Nurse of the Future Competency Committee members were visible in the Massachusetts nursing community and regularly shared informal updates on the review efforts with multiple stakeholders during the process. Updates were also shared with health care organizations and academic partners at board and committee meetings, as well as within the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.

Following the completion of the 2016 competency updating process, the Nurse of the Future Competency Committee and the MAAC jointly developed a webinar that was sponsored by the Massachusetts Hospital Association. Webinar participants from at least 18 states received an overview of how the competencies were updated, as well as revisions to the accompanying Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies Toolkit. During the presentation, there was an opportunity for participants to submit questions to the presenters, creating opportunities for connection and greater dissemination of the work.

The final version of the Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies was posted on the MAAC and partner websites; partners include the Organization of Nurse Leaders, the Department of Higher Education, and the Massachusetts Hospital Association. The Department of Higher Education also distributed a press release to inform the Massachusetts education community that the competencies had been updated and were available upon request.

A tracking form has been developed to capture both statewide and national utilization of the competency work. Currently tracking forms have been received from 18 states and some international representatives.

The Department of Higher Education has also used the Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies as a module within the Centralized Clinical Placement Management System Online Orientation Program. This Internet-based software system streamlines the scheduling of clinical education placements and is another way to bridge the transition between education and practice settings. The system is used by more than 200 health care organizations throughout Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island.

ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES Practical Nurse Competencies

The Nurse of the Future Competency Committee included representation from licensed practical nurse (LPN) programs within the state. As the work on the RN competencies was proceeding, the LPN representatives supported the development of a set of competencies for practical nurses. A subgroup of the committee was then formed to begin a process of aligning the details embedded in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for both levels of practice, while assuring the discrete differences within the scope of practice for each role. It was important to maintain consistency within the two sets of competencies to better facilitate academic progression from LPN to RN education and practice.

Toolkit Update

As noted above, following the development of the original Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies (Massachusetts Department of

Higher Education Nursing Initiative, 2010), a MAAC subcommittee developed a toolkit to facilitate utilization of the competencies within both education and practice. The original authors of the toolkit were asked to review the updated RN competencies and make updates as appropriate. The current toolkit captures the updated competencies with case studies to demonstrate practical examples of how the competencies can be embedded in both education and practice sites.

In addition to being used in nursing curricula across the state, the toolkit is used in a variety of clinical practice settings where newly licensed nurses participate in new-graduate orientation programs and residency programs. As an example, Boston Medical Center nurse educators and leaders have used the scenarios in the toolkit to promote discussion within the new-graduate nurse cohort and integrate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes within the orientation program. The medical center has also embedded the competencies in its nursing performance evaluations.

CONCLUSION

With the great opportunities for population health provided as a result of the passage of the Affordable Care Act and the reconceptualized roles for nursing found within the IOM's (2011) *Future of Nursing* report, there is an ongoing need to identify the competencies needed for nurses to meet the expectations of their expanded roles. The updated Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies provide a framework to capture the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed for entry-level professional nurses to practice efficiently, effectively, and safely, while recognizing the importance of the social determinants of health in this constantly changing health care environment.

The challenge for the nursing community will be to develop specific psychometric tools to measure the performance of all nurses to meet these expected competencies. Through this process, nurses will inform best practice in the journey to meet and exceed the expectations of health care consumers as the framework for accountable care delivery continues to be defined.

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