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**Empowering RNs to Develop Individualized Plans of Care
for Hospitalized Hemodialysis Patients**

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Problem: Dialysis RNs at a large, rural hospital were disconnected from the acute-care patient's overall plan of care (POC) and specific dialysis needs. The nursing leader, as a change agent, identified a professional development need for the dialysis RNs to be able to create an individualized plan of care for each HD patient.

Description: One trait of a profession is being able to identify its unique characteristics which separate it from other disciplines. The subspecialty of acute-care (inpatient) nephrology nursing exists to meet the specific needs of end-stage renal disease (ESRD) patients apart from the outpatient setting. In an effort to conceptualizing the acute-care hemodialysis nurse's contribution to nephrology nursing and inpatient nursing, the following four specialty areas have been identified as the cornerstones of practice: acute renal failure, new to dialysis, sick ESRD, and dialysis access problems. Each patient in one of the cornerstone areas has unique patient assessment, management, and educational needs.

Project: Twelve HD nurses were divided into four committees to learn more about the evidence-based care standards of each cornerstone area, identify current gaps in practice, and propose ways to improve the care for the patient. The RNs have been presenting their findings to their teammates using structured but informal teaching methods. The nurse leader is working with the nursing informatics department to create an area where the HD nurses will document their goals, measures, and interventions in the patient's electronic health record.

Implications: These four cornerstones of practice serve as a conceptual framework to plan and implement patient-specific nursing interventions, orientation programs, nurse-to-nurse report, and quality improvement projects. A qualitative and/or quantitative research study could be designed seeking to answer the question: How does the implementation of acute-care hemodialysis POCs impact the assessment, management, and education of HD patients in the hospital?

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