Investigating Nurse Practice Errors

NCSBN created TERCAP® (Taxonomy of Error, Root Cause Analysis and Practice-Responsibility), a national nursing adverse event reporting system, as a tool to investigate the causes of nursing practice errors. Currently, 25 boards of nursing (BONs) have contributed cases to TERCAP and data collection is still ongoing.

Analyses of the data in TERCAP aim to determine the characteristics of nurses committing errors, the impact of the work environment on nursing error risk and characteristics of patients involved in cases of nursing practice errors. Initial studies have shown that among disciplined nurses, those who had a negative job history (e.g., discipline or termination for practice-related issues by employers in the past) were at a much higher risk for committing additional errors in practice compared to those who did not have a negative job history (Zhong & Thomas, 2012; Apple, Alexander, & Zhong, 2013).

A review of nurses’ job histories showed that 35 percent of nurses involved in cases reported to TERCAP had been previously disciplined and 34 percent of nurses had been terminated by their previous employers due to violations related to practice issues. Even with remedial action(s), these nurses bear a higher risk for additional practice errors. More than 72 percent of the nurses in the sample who were involved in practice errors left their employment due to termination or personal decision.

The next NCSBN TERCAP study will focus on discipline trends. A better understanding of the causes of nursing errors is the first step toward the development of targeted strategies for intervention. ●

### Job History of Nurses Committed Practice Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job History</th>
<th>Yes % (N)</th>
<th>No % (N)</th>
<th>Unknown % (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discipline by Employers</td>
<td>35 (629)</td>
<td>57 (1,020)</td>
<td>8 (141)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Termination</td>
<td>34 (607)</td>
<td>36 (652)</td>
<td>30 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline by BONs</td>
<td>9 (158)</td>
<td>88 (1,580)</td>
<td>3 (52)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REFERENCES**


As of March 2014, **25** BONs have submitted **2,700** cases to the TERCAP database nationally.
Substance Use Disorder Resources Now Available

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a serious issue facing the nursing profession today. Unique workplace factors, such as long work hours, stress and access to medications increases a nurse’s risk for developing an SUD. It’s a difficult subject, but an important one that needs to be taken seriously by all health care professionals, including nursing students. Nurses practicing with an SUD are not only a risk to themselves, but also to the patients they care for. To help combat this growing issue, NCSBN has released two new Learning Extension courses, an SUD video and two free brochures to provide nurses and nursing students with much needed education on SUD in the workplace.

In the “Understanding Substance Use Disorder in Nursing” course, nurses and nurse managers gain a new perspective on SUD, and learn that recovery and return to practice is possible. The “Nurse Manager Guidelines for Substance Use Disorder” course is designed specifically for nurse managers, and prepares them to proactively prevent, detect and intervene when an SUD is suspected. This course also discusses nurse manager responsibilities, and how to facilitate healthy boundaries and good communication. These courses are available at the NCSBN Learning Extension.

The video, “Substance Use Disorder in Nursing,” and its companion brochure, What You Need to Know About Substance Use Disorder in Nursing, provide a comprehensive overview of SUD. Learn how to identify signs and symptoms of SUD, understand the investigation and intervention process, and discover what happens when a nurse with an SUD returns to work.

For nurse managers, there’s the brochure, “A Nurse Manager’s Guide to Substance Use Disorder in Nursing.” This brochure outlines the roles and responsibilities of the nurse manager in situations involving SUD. It is currently available to download; you can order hard copies in the coming weeks.

Nurses that educate themselves about SUD not only help their colleagues, but they also protect the patients that nurses care for.