

The BWH Department of Nursing Philosophy on Nursing Education

The vision for the Department of Nursing is *excellent care to patients and families, with the best staff, in the safest environment*. This vision is grounded in nursing research that demonstrates a relationship among formal educational preparation of nurses, characteristics of the care environment and patient outcomes. Evidence suggests that better patient outcomes result when a higher proportion of baccalaureate-prepared registered nurses provide care in hospitals (Aiken, Clarke, Cheung, Sloane and Silber, 2003; Estabrooks, Midodzi, Cummings, Ricker, Giovannetti, 2005). Increasingly complex patient care needs, clinical therapeutics and teamwork require sophisticated nursing judgment. Baccalaureate preparation in nursing, appropriate clinical expertise and adequate staffing resources are all critical to support patient care. For this reason the Department of Nursing is requiring the baccalaureate degree in nursing for all newly licensed nurses who are not BWH employees as of January 2008.

We know that clinical learning occurs in formal educational programs and experientially in clinical practice. Therefore, a variety of educational resources are available to support the practice development of BWH nurses. Formal nursing education is supported through the hospital's tuition reimbursement policy and Department of Nursing scholarships and awards; continuing education is available through conferences and seminars; and consultation and clinical support are available in real time for nurses while caring for patients and families.

The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) were developed to answer some common questions. We encourage employees to talk to their manager or Human Resource Recruiter if they have specific or additional questions and we will try to answer them in a timely manner.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. ***Q: Why do new graduate nurses need a baccalaureate degree (BSN) to work at BWH?***

A: There is growing evidence in the nursing literature that a professional nursing workforce consisting of a higher percentage of baccalaureate-prepared nurses is associated with better patient outcomes. The vision for the department of nursing is excellent care to patients and families, with the best staff, in the safest environment. This educational requirement for our newly licensed nurses will help us to advance the vision for the department of nursing.

2. ***Q: Is it true that only nurses with a BSN are being hired at BWH?***

A: No. The Departments of Nursing and Human Resources both value and actively recruit Nurses with clinical experience. We also know that practice is guided by both theoretical knowledge (usually acquired through formal education) as well as practical knowledge (acquired through experience). So, experience and clinical expertise are critical to providing good care. Although the DON is committed to hiring newly licensed nurses with a baccalaureate degree in nursing, nurses with at least 2 years equivalent nursing experience seeking a position will be offered interviews based on open positions regardless of their educational preparation.

3. ***Q: If research supports better patient outcomes for nurses with BSN degrees, why does BWH hire experienced nurses with an associate degree and/or diploma?***

A: Nursing research validates the importance of both formalized knowledge (school) and experiential or skilled knowledge. Nurses develop experiential knowledge in practice as they advance from novice to expert. Therefore, excellent nursing care is possible with a blend of experienced nurses and newly graduated nurses working collaboratively within a patient care unit.

4. ***Q: What if I have a bachelor's degree in another field and I am a new graduate with an associate's degree--- can I be hired?***

A: No. The Bachelor of Science in Nursing is grounded in nursing knowledge and provides content in the areas of professionalism, leadership and management, human response to health/illness, critical thinking, and nursing practice across the lifespan. This content provides the foundation for clinical leadership at the bedside. Without this critical foundation of discipline specific knowledge, new graduates may not be able to effectively care for the acutely ill patients with complex needs who seek care at Brigham and Women's Hospital. The knowledge required is knowledge in the discipline and so we are requiring the equivalent of a bachelor's preparation in nursing.

5. ***Q: I have been working at BWH for 5 years as a PCA and will be graduating from an associate degree program this summer---can I work here?***

A: BWH and the department of nursing support career advancement for employees. In 2007, the department of nursing made the decision to require a baccalaureate degree in Nursing for newly licensed nurses. To support BWH employees during this transition period, which will be from January 2008 to May 2010, employees who currently receive work force development support and who graduate from an associate degree program by May 2010 will be granted an interview if positions are available. However, there is no job guarantee.

The decision to offer a position will be made by the nurse manager based on factors that influence the ability of the manager to support an employee with a nursing education with a technical focus. These factors may include: patient acuity, the number of baccalaureate prepared nurses on the unit, experience of the nursing staff, and clinical educator support. Over the next several years the department of nursing is committed to provide education and support for current employees to help guide the decision about nursing education.

6. ***Q: I am receiving money from Work Force Development to complete my associate degree can I apply for a nursing position?***

A: Yes. If you are *currently* in the Work Force Development Program, plan to graduate by 2010 and are receiving funds to complete your associate's degree we will facilitate an interview with a nurse manager. The decision to hire is the manager's who must take into consideration many issues including the needs of the patient population, the number of experienced/inexperienced nurses etc. Going forward Work Force Development will only support employees who are in a baccalaureate degree in nursing. Again, these employees will have an interview facilitated with a nurse manager. Remember, the decision to hire is the nurse manager's and therefore, no job is guaranteed.

References

Aiken, L. H., Clarke, S., Cheung, R. B., Sloane, D. M., & Silber, J. H. (2003). Educational levels of hospital nurses and surgical patient mortality. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 290, 1617-1623.

Estabrooks, C.A.; Midodzi, W., Greta, G., Ricker, K., Giovannetti, P. (2005). The impact of hospital nursing characteristics on 30 day mortality. *Nursing Research*. 54, 74-84.