



Media Advisory



North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 6, 2010

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Malcom Randall VA Post-BSN Nurse Residency Program Nationally Accredited

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — The Commission of Collegiate Nursing Education has formally accredited the Malcom Randall Veterans Affairs Medical Center’s post-baccalaureate nurse residency program — a part of a formalized VA-University of Florida College of Nursing partnership program. This makes it one of only three formally accredited nurse residencies in the country and the first-ever nurse residency accredited at a VA facility.

The post-baccalaureate nurse residency is a yearlong program that pairs new Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree graduates with preceptors and mentors. They experience extensive orientation and training throughout the year. The goal is to provide a structured transition experience from new graduate to professional nurse.

“This is a significant achievement to be the first VA accredited post-BSN residency program in the country. Accreditation provides national recognition of the quality of the residency and further strengthens our nurse residency program,” said North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System Director Thomas Cappello, M.P.H., F.A.C.H.E. “This is the result of the hard work of our VA Nursing Academy staff, our partnership with the University of Florida College of Nursing and the support provided by the VA’s Office of Academic Affiliations and Office of Nursing Services.”

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The VA-UF nursing partnership program is a five-year, \$5 million-plus pilot initiative awarded in 2007 as a part of the national VA Nursing Academy. One of only four partnerships awarded in the first year of the national initiative, it addresses expanded enrollment of nursing students and increasing faculty and also focuses on enhancing nursing practice through initiatives like the nurse residency.

“Our college is a proud partner with the VA on several educational initiatives and we are especially proud of the success of the nurse residency program in achieving national accreditation,” said Kathleen Ann Long, Ph.D., R.N., dean of the UF College of Nursing. “High turnover rates for new nurses are a national problem and not only result in increased hospital costs but also compromise patient safety and the quality of care. Post-baccalaureate nurse residency programs, such as the one at our VA hospital, address these problems effectively.”

The program is based on standards for accreditation of post-baccalaureate nurse residency programs that were developed by the American Nurses Credentialing Center with CCNE, the accrediting body.

“It is estimated that 35 to 60 percent of new graduate nurses leave their original employment site within one year of graduation. They do not feel supported or confident of their abilities,” said Julia Tortorice, M.B.A, M.S.N., R.N., the VA residency program director. “This residency allows us to orient nurses at a slower pace that facilitates application of assessment and communication as well as priority-setting and decision-making skills.

The VA nurse residency program has improved the one-year retention of newly graduated nurses at the Malcom Randall VA from 69 percent in 2007 before the residency to an average of 91 percent since the residency began. A VA survey showed a statistically significant increase in feelings of comfort and competence with clinical practice by residents over the one-year program period. There was also a 100 percent satisfaction rating from both nurse residents and nursing service leadership.

“I am very thankful for the nurse residency program. My year as a resident provided advice and support, which helps when you are a new nurse,” said Holly Williamsen, B.S.N., R.N., a graduate of UF and of the post-B.S.N. nurse residency program who works in the medical intensive care unit at Malcom Randall VA. “It definitely prepared me for my current nursing position.”

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