The CNO/ROI factor of accreditation

and nursing excellence. Although Magnet certification is a nationally recognized program identifying organizations for excellence in nursing services, CNOs must educate: Magnet certification affects all aspects of organizational operations—including the bottom line. The significance of Magnet-recognized organizations and their effect on quality of care are noted throughout healthcare literature. The National Center for Nursing Quality Indicators® (NDNQI) obtains specific patient quality data from many different types of healthcare facilities, including Magnet hospitals. NDNQI notes that data obtained from Magnet facilities have lower fall rates and lower pressure ulcer rates than non-Magnet organizations. The overall mortality within Magnet hospitals is often noted as lower than national average. Not only are there fewer cases of mortality, there are also fewer complications and more favorable outcomes, resulting in shorter length of stay. Further, nurses believe themselves

The makings of a Magnet® manager

highlight the principles behind the pursuit.
By Shannon Grad, MSN, RN

With enhanced technology and public reporting, customers have greater opportunities to be selective of where they choose to receive services. Hospitals today need to look beyond the delivery of patient care and specifically evaluate the “whole package” on a constant basis. Coined as the “gold standard,” Magnet accreditation is sought by hospitals to validate practices and demonstrate performance reflective of excellence in nursing practice and quality patient outcomes.

Magnet recognition is the premier level of acknowledgment awarded to healthcare organizations by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). The standards of evaluation move beyond indicators of nursing excellence to patient outcomes. The process of applying for Magnet designation is laborious and detailed, hence the verbiage “a journey.” And one of the many key stakeholders involved in the journey is the nurse manager.

Buy-in

Nurse managers should be involved in planning from the start. Their buy-in is key, as they represent individual nursing units, role model professional nursing practice, and set the stage for the direct care providers. A nurse manager’s preliminary response to the Magnet journey may not be as exhilarating as expected. As Sullivan and Johnsten (2004) reported, “the biggest resistance was from my nurse leaders. It was a sell job with my leaders because of the work involved.” Fear of the unknown and concern of the workload are very common distresses and can be alleviated and supported through several strategies.

Providing education is a pivotal component in easing the stress and anxiety of the nurse manager. Outlining the foundation and theoretical framework of the Magnet Recognition Program® provides clarity and demonstrates the importance of acknowledging nursing excellence and directing essential change in support of the nursing profession. Education needs to be grounded on the philosophy and goals of Magnet designation. Nurse managers need to have support and comprehension of what the Magnet “seal” truly means.

According to the ANCC, “the program recognizes quality patient care and nursing excellence, providing consumers with the ultimate benchmark to measure the quality of care they can expect to receive. As a natural outcome of this, the program elevates the reputation and standards of the nursing profession.” Buy-in of both staff and nurse managers is evident through enculturation of these tenets into daily nursing practice.

Successful education programs are beyond a 1-hour class. The mission and goals need be repeated and emphasized on at least a monthly basis. Highlighting a patient story provides evidence and reinforces the plan, progress, and reasoning for the journey. The nurse manager may feel overwhelmed and pressured to “get Magnet,” so education needs to alleviate this and highlight the principal reason behind the pursuit. As one expert states, “stress the desire to provide quality patient care in an environment that supports professional nursing practice rather than the need to undergo a multiphase process to achieve ANCC Magnet Recognition.”

Another strategy to enhance nurse manager buy-in is to highlight why and share evidence of success. It’s a
as providing higher-quality nursing care to their patients: In a secondary analysis of aggregated data from more than 10,000 staff nurses from 34 hospitals, both Magnet and non-Magnet facilities note significant difference in their perception of quality. With a quality care question of “very high quality,” Magnet hospital staff nurse respondents noted 48.6% agreement, whereas non-Magnet staff nurse respondents noted 32.2% agreement.10 Thus, quality of care isn’t only perceived as better in Magnet hospitals, but extensive research and literature confirms these findings.

And satisfaction reported by nurses is unprecedented. When Magnet and non-Magnet staff nurses were presented with associating their current overall job satisfaction with “I love it,” with a point-scale indicator of 8.5 to 10, Magnet hospitals rated 25.2%, whereas non-Magnet staff were able to associate “I love it” only 15.4%.10 The satisfaction of nurses in Magnet hospitals has been attributed to decreased nurse-patient ratios;

great challenge for some nurse managers to envision an environment of excellence. It’s also very common to feel that reality isn’t tangible to achieve, especially in the infancy stages of a hospital’s Magnet journey. A frequent concern is one of “we’ll never get there.” With this in mind, field trips or outings to other Magnet facilities are highly effective strategies to bring a vision closer to reality.

Magnet facilities are a valuable resource to other institutions, staff, and managers. On a field trip, individuals have the opportunity to explore, interview staff who have been recently designated or redesignated, and visualize an exemplar of similar institutions demonstrating nursing excellence and achieving quality patient outcomes. Encouraging managers to establish liaisons with designated institutions provides an ongoing support system shown to be greatly appreciated.

Another type of field trip rewarding for nurse managers is group attendance at a hospital-based research or quality day at Magnet-designated facilities. Nurse managers discover the benefits and end products of well-established shared governance activities and evidence-based practices. During the beginning stages of the journey, this delivers a visualization of the future—a light at the end of the tunnel.

A final buy-in strategy is the utilization of outcomes. Part of the journey is evaluating, researching, and implementing best practices in nursing care. Sharing and highlighting unit-based results following changes in practice reflects positive patient outcomes. Data and trends become an objective and tangible focus for which managers can relate a cause and effect to practice changes.

Communication
Consistent communication with nurse managers is another supportive strategy through a hospital’s Magnet journey. Communication should be open, participative, and timely. Goal-oriented timelines and grids display concrete points, delegate responsibility, and keep time-sensitive objectives in order. Well-organized and documented communications deliver the same message to managers and all involved in the process. Maintaining a standing agenda item, such as “Magnet Update,” is an effective venue to share relevant information and progress. This standing item provides all nurse managers the opportunity to participate in the planning of goals, actions, and timelines, in addition to celebrating the successes of accomplishments and progress. It’s essential for the nurse manager to have ownership and accountability of each action item in order to successfully communicate it to the next level, this being the unit staff level.

Maintaining open lines of communication throughout the institution, executive to unit level, provides a solid foundation for managers to build upon. As important as it is for managers to be on the same page, there needs to be tools available and venues appropriate for them to distribute and disseminate the information. To avoid silos, an organization needs to provide the appropriate tools for managers to disseminate information both vertically and horizontally throughout the hospital. Successful communication strategies are monthly newsletters, open forums, staff meetings, message boards, and email. Nurse managers need both the administrative and technologic support to facilitate the exchange of information with their staff.
Focus on patient care and opportunities to influence patient care; flexibility of scheduling; educational opportunities; and recognition and rewards for nursing excellence.1,2,6

**Twice rewarded**
The benefits of nursing satisfaction are twofold, as satisfaction not only affects the quality of care delivered, but also aids in retention and recruitment. Although 80% of nurses in Magnet facilities reported that they would advise nursing as a profession, only 67% in non-Magnet would make the same suggestion.3 Retention and recruitment in Magnet designated facilities can also be used by CNOs in obtaining support from the CFO and COO. Retention contributes to development and use of nursing knowledge, better patient outcomes, increased satisfaction, innovated change, employer of choice, and increased productivity.11 With nursing care accounting for 25% to 33%

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**Leadership development**
In many instances, an abundance of time and effort is invested in evaluating the needs of the RN providing direct patient care, and the professional development needs of managers go overlooked. As a result of nursing shortage, there are many novice managers practicing today. Some have recently transitioned from staff nurses themselves and lack leadership experience and capabilities. On the opposite end of the spectrum, there are nurse managers who have directed their nursing units for decades. An overall needs assessment specific to leadership is necessary to provide the skill-set and support to nurse managers. Following an assessment, provision of education and team-building exercises offer the professional development and leadership growth essential for managers to succeed and thrive through the Magnet journey.

In reference to management style, the Magnet Recognition Program states, “Nursing leaders create an environment supporting participation. Feedback is encouraged and is valued at all levels of the organization. Nurses serving in leadership positions are visible, accessible and committed to communicating effectively with staff.”1 Nurse managers may require mentoring to feel confident and competent specific to these expectations. Mentoring is a powerful strategy that’s sometimes overlooked. One of the most effective ways to build successful nurse leaders is to encourage nurse leaders in an expert and established stage to develop the novice leaders. Development and support of nurse managers is the responsibility of the hospital and should gravitate from the top down.

As hospitals grow and develop nursing staff, the same efforts need to be invested into nurse managers’ professional growth and development. A nurse manager is often inundated from every direction throughout the Magnet journey. Pressures include quality indicators, nursing and patient satisfaction, and productivity—in addition to the daily operations and delivery of quality patient care. With this in mind, leadership development and education needs to be provided in a creative and flexible manner.

A leadership development series outlines a curriculum of leadership theory, strategies, and skills, which provides nurse managers the skill-set to foster an environment that empowers and respects the nursing profession. Breakout and role-playing sessions are an integral part of the development series, as they provide the opportunity to practice dialogue and brainstorm as a team regarding real-time and applicable challenges. The nurse manager gains greater problem-solving capabilities, enhanced leadership skills, and greater collegial relationships among the team.

**Balance**
Nurse managers today balance a multitude of responsibilities. Above and beyond fiscal tasks and management, managers assume responsibility for the provision of quality, safe, and patient-centered delivery of care and the oversight of a cohesive and team-oriented workforce. When approached with the objective of applying for Magnet designation, even the most talented may shy away, secondary to a knowledge deficit. Naturally as nurses, the main objective is to provide the best care possible and accomplish it according to best practice. Simply stated, this is what Magnet designation reflects—in general all the amazing things that nurses do every day.

**REFERENCES**
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The author has disclosed that she has no significant relationship with or financial interest in any commercial companies that pertain to this educational activity.