



January 20th 2021 | CNO & Dean Rounding Report

Guest Speakers

Kelly Espinoza PhD, RN, Vice President & Chief Nursing Officer, Legacy Salmon Creek, President NWONL.

January was our first dialog concerning both the year ahead and what is collectively right in front of us. It expands on the December session and prompts us as leaders philosophically to wrestle pragmatically and empirically with the intertwined current and future state of nursing. Here is what we learned:

Is our “Nursing Archetype” Changing?

Focus Areas

Kelley Espinoza, Legacy Salmon Creek, has asked the collective leaders across Oregon and Washington two open ended questions for contemplation and action borne from the crucible of 2020:

- What is our future?
- How do we tell the story of Nursing now?

Kelly expanded: “As CNOs and Deans (senior leaders), how can we harness the stories and opportunities, the lessons learned to reinvigorate nursing?”

How to Position?

The concern is greater than the obvious unprecedented demands foisted on front-line and clinical nursing staff, it includes Nursing Leadership at all levels. Within the dialog, both Kelly and the Leaders present acknowledge that “our best opportunities may be our greatest challenges” and therefore “how do we (as senior leaders) infuse energy and enthusiasm across the board while simultaneously promoting nurse leadership carry to the vision forward?” This is a complex and deep question with no quick check-list of remedies. It was brought forward as a thought leadership exercise for all the regional Senior Leadership.

In response, a specific concern that resounded with the group present is: “Once

Focus on the Positive

the wave of covid crisis ebbs, there will be increased need and work in clinically integrated care, outside of acute hospital care. Will we be ready to pivot organizationally and academically to meet that impending demand?" Certainly looking forward and positioning effectively is one of the most challenging assignments for senior leaders.

As a cohort, we acknowledge that harnessing "positive sentiment" as we look towards the future *is critical*. More than morale boosting... it is the nuanced approach of continually "telling our Nursing story" while honoring the historical challenges we have faced. With the necessity to both reward the work of nursing (now) and build momentum (for what's to come). The goal being to ensure nursing will be rewarded and rewarding in the future.

Conversation distilled into "what are the principle levers we can pull to activate this sentiment?" Mentoring and supporting new and experienced nurse leaders (who may be new to the role) was identified as a key lever. Considering that a Nurse Leader, at any level, is effectively a force-multiplier capable of amplifying sentiment positively or inadvertently negatively, it is up to us (Senior Leaders) to ensure we are positioning to support them... and to ensure they are aligned.

The Struggle is Real

Running out of Resilience?

Multiple leaders across the region report, in organizations hit hard by pandemic response, that many nurses have opted to cut back their FTE or leave the high intensity units for assignments that are far less demanding. Leaders identified profound pressure, not just front-line clinical staff, also on our nurse leaders; including our most experienced and tenured nurse leaders who have historically been highly resilient.

One response to the challenge, identified by OHSU, was allowance for creative staffing innovation. More than just role rotation, OHSU has deployed units such as the Connected Care Center with nurses who have not left the organization but opt to be reassigned in a proactive effort to mitigate the loss of experienced and tenured staff from their ranks.

Staffing Challenges Abound

Still, most organizations report multiple staffing challenges. Brining in temporary staffing isn't a quick fix. It means that teams need to formalize and normalize quickly in order to maintain high quality of care and safety standards. That falls on the shoulder of leaders. With nurse managers stretched thin, this is a salient concern. The ability to move an organization or clinical unit from "survival response" to "thriving in chaos" is aspirational and to pull it off requires more than vision but prioritized, ongoing inspiration and support from senior nurse leaders.

Effective Graduates

A Shared Challenge.

Academic Leaders have a shared responsibility in striving to produce nursing staff who are readily competent and available when and where the clinical demands may need them most. While this responsibility has not changed for Academic leaders, they too have been challenged. Varying enrollments, some seeing increased interest and enrollment while others are dramatically decreased yields an inconsistent source for Practice Leaders. The downstream effects have (potentially) a compounding negative effect. In a response, Academic Leadership are asking for continued and enhanced partnership from their Practice Leader peers. Two areas of consistent need are:

- Student placements and ensuring solid clinical experience for graduating nurses.
- Organizational residencies, fellowships and internship to help bridge the gap for transition into practice (now more than ever).

Practice Leaders acknowledge the necessity. They simultaneously identify that in the moment, the priority is responding to direct clinical demands and that the constraints placed on their organizations are not just internal, but externally demanded. It is unclear when this will likely resolve but it is tightly coupled with pandemic response.

Nurse Techs a Solution?

Part of RN Pipeline

December's rounding brought the discussion of Nurse Techs to the forefront. This dialog has continued in January. Nursing Technologists, working in the space between a CNA and RN can provide distribution of work and are minted from parallel educational resources. Yet Nurse Techs have been around for quite sometime. The challenge is both in availability and the specific organizational needs, their own policies and operational procedures and demands.

A refrain distilled from the dialog was “just because Nurse Techs are available, it doesn't mean a plug-and-play experience for organizations...” True. However this model does work and provides value in certain operating environments and may be worth the time to investigate further. In the January Rounding, several organizations including Kadlec and Pullman specifically, identified that they have a long history of utilizing Nurse Techs in a successful program.

Academic Leaders noted that in their experience with Nurse Tech programs (in WA state) offer a positive outcome for nurse students and organizations who utilize them. There has

Check NWONL's homepage for what's happening: [Updates and Events](#).

WA Specific

been an increase in licensing for nurse techs, this is overseen by WA-NCQAC:
[Summary of Licensure Requirements.](#)

Not only is type of program potentially beneficial for student nurses, it also allows employers to “try them out” as employees for hire after licensing. This is potentially an interesting value proposition: Practice Leaders could augment their staffing while simultaneously providing clinical exposure and experience for students, with the benefit of getting to trial the students early in their educational journey. Students also get early exposure to the clinical realities of nursing.

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Do you know what NWONL offers your Nurse Leaders?

In 2020, in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic we conducted over 70 real-time engagements via: Councils, Leadership working groups, Rounding Sessions, Virtual Seminars and Educational Events... 14 of those were CE providing. We did it by leveraging the real-time experience and capabilities of our Members and Affiliates to provide relevant value where and when it was needed most.

Thought that may be of of interest...

As Senior Leaders you are the vital link between your Nursing Leaders and their advancement as professionals. We know that developing leaders can be phenomenally challenging. We are Nursing professionals ourselves and strive to be a partner in helping to develop vibrant and adaptive Nursing Leaders so they may be highly effective in shaping healthcare delivery across our Region. It's a salient challenge but we remain steadfast. Consider joining our ranks and being an active part of shaping the future of Nursing Leadership while its being challenged most.