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Neonatal Education Consortium

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Neonatal Education Consortium

The Pew Health Professions Commission believes that schools of nursing must play a more active leadership role in the preparation of practitioners and in shaping the values and direction of the entire health care system. The commission supports the belief that the nation must have practitioners with expanded abilities and new attitudes to meet society's evolving health care needs.¹ One specialization whose growing shortage calls for more attention is that of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners (NNPs).

Neonatal Nurse Practitioners provide direct care to infants and their families in neonatal intensive care units (NICUs), as well as follow-up care. The NNP manages a caseload of patients in consultation and collaboration with physicians and other members of the healthcare team. Using advanced knowledge and skills the NNP exercises independent judgment in the assessment, diagnosis, and plan of care of infants, and in the performance of certain delegated procedures. As an advanced practice neonatal nurse, the NNP also is involved in education, consultation, and research. Amid the current nursing shortage, a sufficient number of Masters-prepared NNPs have not been educated for the management of neonates and their families. The Department of Nursing, Jefferson College of Health Professions (JCHP), Thomas Jefferson University (TJU) has taken the lead in working to alleviate this shortage by offering a NNP program in collaboration with The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), and the University of Delaware (UD) through The Neonatal Education Consortium (NEC).

Awarded to JCHP's Department of Nursing, a three-year, \$650,000 grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), supports TJU, TCNJ, and UD in developing a tri-state regional consortium to promote the education of NNPs. The States of New Jersey and Delaware do not have NNP programs leading to the MSN degree for NNPs. The lack of NNP programs in these states has diminished the employment of NNPs by regional NICUs and limited access to care by underserved populations at level II and III NICUs in the tri-state area. The NEC will build on the highly successful JCHP, Department of Nursing's federally funded IMPART and GEAR-UP grants that focus on the articulation of minority and culturally diverse nursing students at Thomas Jefferson University with goals of preparing more NNPs. The NEC grant will help prepare culturally competent students who be sensitive to underserved populations and will increase access to care in the tri-state area. The core of the NEC project is recruitment of registered nurses into the MSN program for NNPs, on TCNJ, UD and TJU campuses. NEC also seeks to recruit potential NNP students who are represent diverse backgrounds and cultures with the aim of improving access to underserved populations in NJ, PA, and DE.

The Pew Health Professions Commission also calls for an emphasis on coordinated care, interdisciplinary teamwork, and cost-effective care. The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Rockefeller Foundation funded the Health of the Public program to stimulate academic health centers to develop a population perspective through curricular form.² Partnerships such as the NEC that demonstrate collaboration among health professional schools will provide a consortium model of education that translates into meaningful differences in national health quality indicators such as infant mortality. In conclusion, the collaboration between health professional schools and the communities they serve is the first step toward demonstrating cost-effective quality health care.

References

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About the Author

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