

Fact Sheet: The Clinical Nurse Leader

The Clinical Nurse LeaderSM or CNLSM is a new nursing role being developed by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) in collaboration with leaders from the education and practice arenas. AACN is advancing the CNL to improve the quality of patient care and to better prepare nurses to thrive in the health care system. The CNL role emerged following research and discussion with stakeholder groups as a way to engage highly skilled clinicians in outcomes-based practice and quality improvement.

In practice, the CNL oversees the care coordination of a distinct group of patients and actively provides direct patient care in complex situations. This master's degree-prepared clinician puts evidence-based practice into action to ensure that patients benefit from the latest innovations in care delivery. The CNL evaluates patient outcomes, assesses cohort risk, and has the decision-making authority to change care plans when necessary. The CNL is a leader in the health care delivery system, and the implementation of this role will vary across settings.

To support the creation of this new nursing role, AACN has launched a national pilot project involving almost 90 education-practice partnerships in 35 states and Puerto Rico. Partners are working together to develop master's degree programs to prepare CNLs, integrate this clinician into the health care system, and evaluate outcomes. **To find out more about the Clinical Nurse Leader, see <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/cnl>.**

Recent Developments

- On August 9, 2005, AACN will present the CNL Faculty Development Workshop in conjunction with the Plexus Institute at the University of Kansas School of Nursing in Kansas City, KS. All academic and clinical faculty participating in the CNL project are invited to attend this workshop which will facilitate designing master's curriculum, developing didactic and clinical experiences, preparing preceptors, and shaping immersion experiences.
- AACN invited the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) to join the CNL Implementation Task Force, and Karen Haase-Herrick, AONE Past-President, has joined the project. Since one of AONE's major initiatives is the redesign of patient care delivery models for the future, there is good synergy for both associations in this work. The AONE Board believes that innovative pilots such as the CNL are critical to informing the field for the future.
- From January-April 2005, the CNL Implementation Task Force held the first series of regional meetings to assist education-practice partnerships in their work to develop CNL programs. Meetings were held in Washington, DC, San Diego, Atlanta, Boston and Chicago. Representatives from 15 state boards of nursing attended these meetings as well as stakeholders from the American Nurses Association, AONE and other groups.

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