

# Preparing for our future is CRITICAL

## Our story: Port Macquarie Base Hospital Critical Care Rotation Program

### How were things before?

Port Macquarie Base Hospital (PMBH) offers a structured 'First Year Registered Nurse' (FYRN) program. However it's without a formal advanced critical care pathway for RNs transitioning out of the FYRN program. Reviewing the retention/resignation data of the thirty four PMBH FYRNs recruited into the program in 2017 we found:

- **52% of the 2017 FYRN group resigned from PMBH within 2 years of program completion.**
- **22% of the 2017 FYRN group who rotated to a critical care area during their program remain working at PMBH in Critical Care 2019.**

With this information at hand we sought to gain a better understanding from the 2017 FYRN group who remain working in Critical Care at PMBH, to hear their perspective of what may be contributing to the FYRN low retention rate. Key points that came from their stories were: *job dissatisfaction; feeling unsupported in the working environment; limited opportunity for professional development & growth; feeling vulnerable caring for patients as they were working with a greater ratio of novice practitioners compared to experienced critical care nurses.*

Reflecting on this new knowledge our collective vision was to promote recruitment & retention of critical care trained nurses & to support a more versatile critical care workforce. Our strategy for this was to develop a comprehensive professional development program supporting PMBH Critical Care RN's to: further develop advanced critical care skills; develop enhanced capability in clinical leadership skills; opportunity to network broadly with the PMBH Critical Care teams.

### What did we do?

NSW Nurse & Midwifery strategy funded a PMBH 12 month pilot Critical Care Rotation program in 2019. Permanent RN's were recruited from PMBH Critical Care areas. The program offered placements in the four Critical Care specialty areas of PMBH: Emergency; Cardiology; Intensive Care; Recovery & Anaesthetics.

To support clinical learning the program included: supernumerary orientation shifts; education days targeting critical care & leadership topics; RN participants were encouraged to complete a post graduate study in a field of critical care; once completing the program the RN was committed to work a further year in their substantive position or another PMBH Critical Care Area.



I saw the growth the program had to offer. The RN was stepping out of her shadow, really showing herself & the skill set she had to give.

CNE

### What difference has the program made?

Early review of the Critical Care Program revealed significant person centered outcomes which have made a positive difference for RN participants, staff, patients/families. Four key findings revealed were:

**FOSTERING GROWTH, VERSATILITY & CARE OF A STRONG SKILLED PERSON CENTRED WORKFORCE:** RN participants & staff have shared how the program offers a supportive framework for continuous learning, development & support. RN participants notching up their critical care skills has translated into a confident & motivated practitioner. We are seeing the RN participant showing consistency in using their advanced critical care skills in patient care & they are also sharing their new skill ability & knowledge with their team.

*The program has given me an incredible career growth opportunity. It's been such an exciting challenge & refreshing to relearn so many skills & the management of medical conditions that I have not encountered for years. This rotation has allowed me to learn so much about caring for critically ill patients.* RN Participant

**INTERDEPARTMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS:** This was an aspect valued by RN participants. One participant reflected how with her clinical rotations the staff were all so welcoming & accommodating. This element created so many new work relationships throughout the hospital which opened up so many more familiar faces for the participant & this made coming to work for her more enjoyable. Meeting new people also led to new networking opportunities within the PMBH critical care areas.

**GAINING A BROADER HOSPITAL PERSPECTIVE:** Rotation to new critical care units gave the RN participant a clear understanding of units' idiosyncrasies & a broader view of the patient's journey.

**INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITMENT TO CARE:** Gaining a broader hospital perspective coupled with strengthened interdepartmental relationships bought to light a relational aspect for the RN participant, this being interdepartmental commitment to care. This aspect had a direct impact on patient care evidenced by: improved interdepartmental patient handovers; timely patient transfers between Critical Care areas; the RN participant having new critical care skills & knowledge on board was able to better advocate for safe patient transfer between critical care departments.

*The program has given me the opportunity to witness, experience & understand the stresses & demands of each area so that now I can work as a more efficient team member in the bigger picture.* RN Participant

### What now for the future?

To sum it up, the Critical Care Rotational Program model proves to be a valuable strategy for providing continuous learning, development & support for novice critical care RN practitioners. It's been a motivating factor for the RN participants that's topped up their career wellbeing. Our hope is to build on this work, embedding the program model as a permanent 2nd year critical care career pathway for RN's transitioning out of the FYRN program.

So to prepare for the future in the critical care setting where we can enrich care for staff & patients, it's important to work together with all key stakeholders to further evolve the program, making recruitment & retention of critical nurses the best it can be.

#### Reference List:

- Furtado, L, Batista, M and Silva, F. (2011) Leadership's Impact in Turnover & Career Abandonment Intention: The Azorean Hospital Nurses Case, *Hospital Topics*, 89, 3, (51), (2011).
- McKenna, L. & Newton, J. (2008). After the graduate year: a phenomenological exploration of how new nurses develop their knowledge and skill over the first 18 months following graduation. *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, Volume 25 Number 4
- Santos, R. (2017) Uses, Benefits, and Limitations of Job Rotation in Software Engineering, *ACM SIGSOFT Software Engineering Notes*, 41, 6, (1), (2017).