

**TITLE** Mentoring Nurse Leaders in Exemplary Leadership Practices

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**OBJECTIVE** The aim of this pilot study was to evaluate the effect of structured mentoring within the conceptual framework of Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership

### **METHODOLOGY**

The project was initiated with a pilot group of six nurse managers within the Obstetric and Newborn Division of Magee-Women's Hospital of University of Pittsburgh Medical Center who were invited to participate. They completed the Leadership Practices Inventory and randomly selected eight-to-ten members of their staff to complete the LPI-Observer. The results of the 360-degree assessment were used to provide a framework for targeted, individualized mentoring provided by the nurse manager's nursing director. After reviewing the entire report, the mentor and nurse manager discussed potential target areas for mentoring, considering those behaviors with the largest gap between self and observer scores and/or overall lower scores in a practice area. The nurse manager was also asked to seek additional clarity from her group of observers if needed. Individual mentoring sessions occurred monthly with each of the NM participants for a period of six months. Each session lasted one hour and included a similar format each time. In this study all of the nurse managers were women, with an average age of 43, an average of 21 years of nursing experience, management experience ranging from 3 to 15, all had at least a BSN degree.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

Pre and post-test frequency scores for all five leadership practices increased, significantly so for Inspire, Challenge, Enable, and Encourage, and somewhat for Model ( $p < .06$ ). Although demonstrating a similar positive trend in all five practices, the average of the observer scores did not reach a statistically significant level. More specifically, four of the six nurse managers improved in the one leadership practice that was their focal area for mentoring, one stayed the same, and the one who decreased indicated that she was harder on herself in the second administration than the first, realizing that she still had much room to improve. Comparison of the Observer scores revealed a positive change for three nurse managers, one remained the same, and two decreased. The author notes: "However, all six acknowledged they recognized their overall scores for all five leadership practices for both self and observer assessments increased post-mentoring" (p. 15).

An additional evaluation of the project consisted of confidential independent interviews by an experienced third-party and these demonstrated an overall positive response to the program by all of the nurse managers. The author notes: “The NMs identified increased awareness, focus, and clarity as insights into their leadership skills reflected by the 360 degree feedback. The individualized mentoring was well-received and the opportunity to have dedicated, structured time providing direction and support was described as helpful and valuable” (p. 16).

The author concludes:

This pilot project demonstrated that structured mentoring provided by a direct supervisor within the Exemplary Practices of Leadership conceptual framework can be an effective strategy in improving the leadership practices of frontline nurse managers. Time as a barrier to finding a mentor and sustaining an effective mentoring relationship can be overcome by incorporating structured mentoring into the existing relationship between nurse leaders and their direct reports. An evidence based 360 degree feedback tool provides a basis upon which to identify opportunities for growth and assists in targeting areas for mentoring. With planning and active participation by the mentor and mentees, the mentoring process can have an ongoing positive effect on the reporting relationship and the continued development of nurse leaders (p. 18).