



Internship Program Development Post Pandemic : A Whole New World of Orientation

Laura Hailes, BSN, RN, CPN, Lina Clark, BSN, RN, BMTCN, CPHON,
Alex Rossmassler, BSN, RN & Mindy Weed, BSN, RN, CPN

C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, University of Michigan Health, Ann Arbor, Michigan



Background

Newly licensed nurses (NLNs) face a monumental task of successfully transitioning from theory to practice. Preceptors and educators identified pronounced gaps of knowledge and skills starting in the spring of 2021. The pandemic forced schools to replace hands on clinical with virtual experiences. Students missed direct care clinical hours, in-person lectures and live simulations that would have traditionally been part of their nursing education.

Unit-based educators at our hospital identified an increased incidence of new nurses failing the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) prior to job start as well as an increase in orientation extensions for NLNs. In 2022, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing reported that first time N#LEX pass rates (79.9%) nationwide were the lowest in over a decade.

In 2023, 34% of registered nurses (RNs) left their job within the 1st year nationwide, which is 5.3% higher than in 2022. The average cost of turnover for one bedside RN was \$56,300 in 2023 (Nursing Solutions Incorporated), resulting in the average hospital losing between \$3.9m - \$5.8m annually. The general care units at our hospital historically had little to no turnover in this year 1 demographic. There was a noticeable increase of 12 total RN's that left the bedside within the 1st year in fiscal years 2022 & 2023, equating to a \$675,600 loss.

Literature suggests that longer orientations with increased supports result in improved retention. (Rush et al., 2019)

Clinical Question

For NLNs, does participation in a structured nursing internship program improve clinical competence and interpersonal skills as they transition to independent practice by supporting them in the following ways?

1. Allowing for additional education days with their hospital wide cohort group
2. Extending time with their preceptors
3. Providing peer support within the cohort group
4. Allowing for opportunities to discuss their orientation experiences

Literature Review

The following themes were identified from the literature:

- Nursing students graduating during the pandemic are less prepared for the workforce when compared to graduates from previous years. (Pate et al., 2024; Ravik et al., 2023)
- There is improved likelihood of successful transition to practice for NLN's when provided with expanded opportunities for hands on skill development as well as emotional support. (McMillan et al., 2023; Reebals et al., 2022; Rush et al., 2019)
- Perception of increased stress was consistently self reported by NLNs as they transition from nursing school to independent practice. (Reebals et al., 2022)

Design and Methods

Design:

There were existing internship programs in CES, PICU and the OR but not in general care. Michigan Medicine requires interns to remain on the unit for 2 years after completion of orientation and receive 5% less pay for the duration of orientation.

The primary components of the general care nurse internship program included the following:

- A 2-week extension of 1:1 preceptor time caring for patients (increasing total orientation time to 12 weeks)
- Three educator designed seminars for the intern cohort to attend

Seminar Curriculum: To facilitate the development of clinical competence, confidence, and professional integration

Seminar 1: Clinical Skills and Safety (8 hour training)
Seminar 2: Professional Development and Behavior Management (8 hour training)
Seminar 3: Peer Interaction and Reflection (4 hour training)

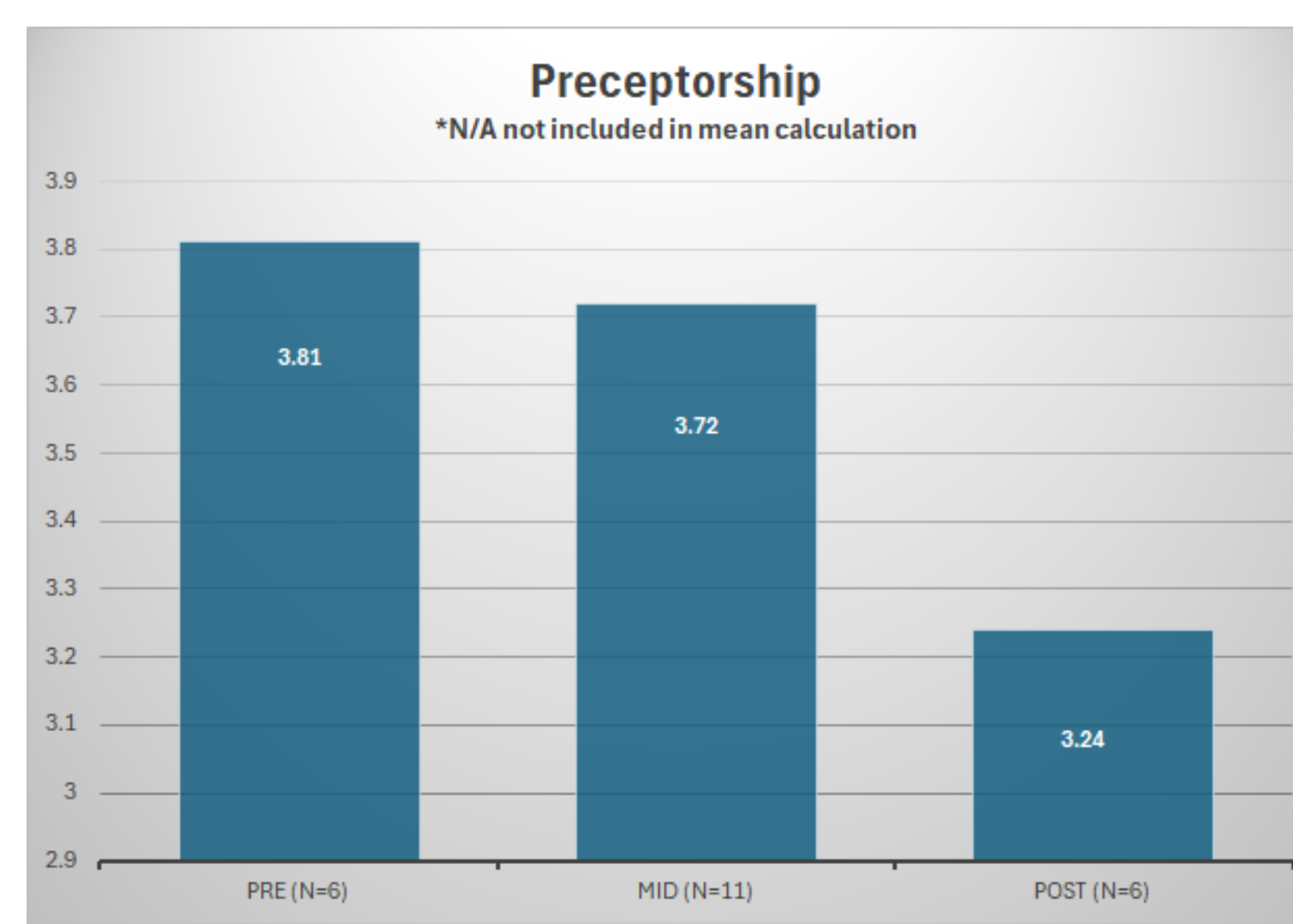
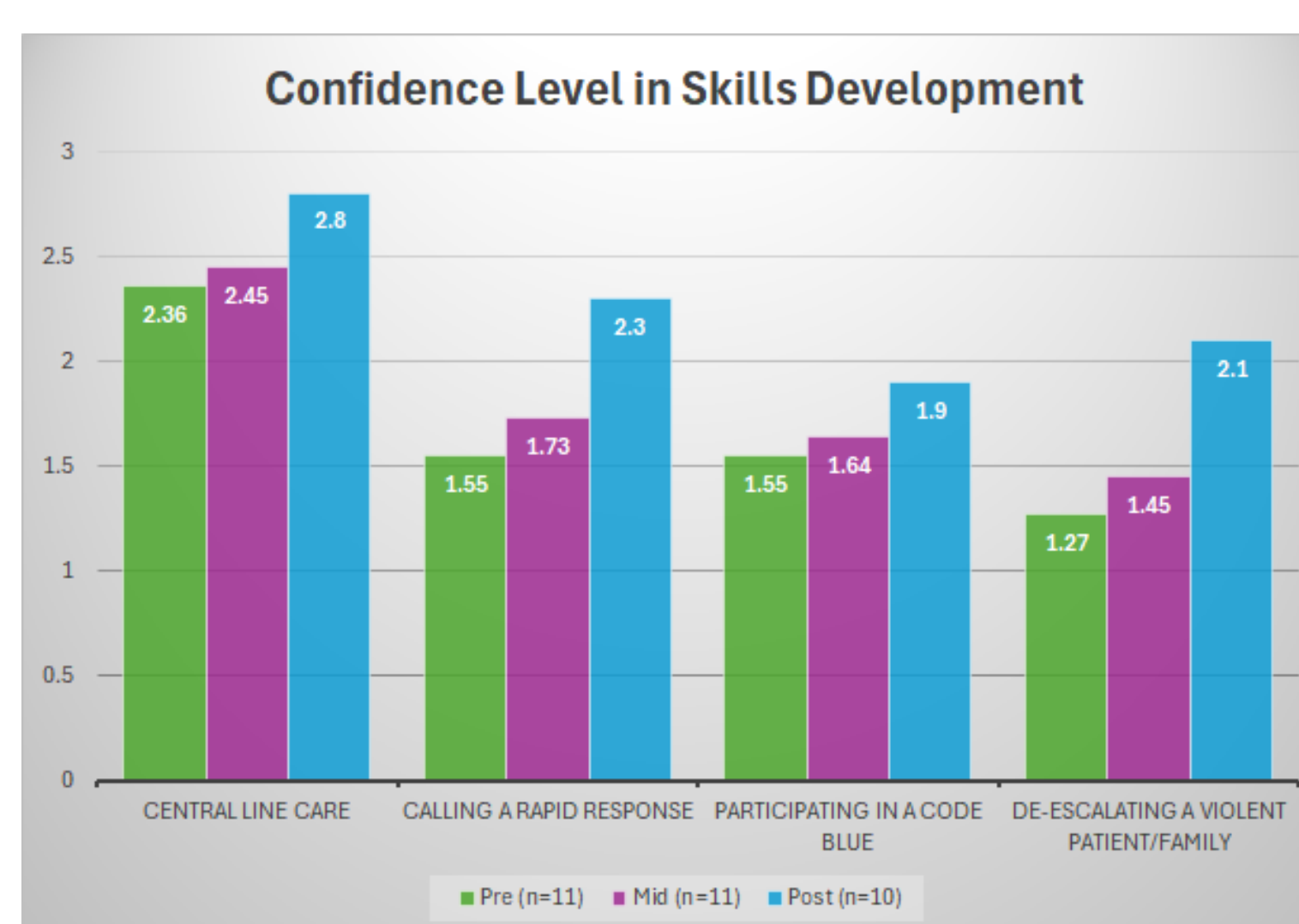
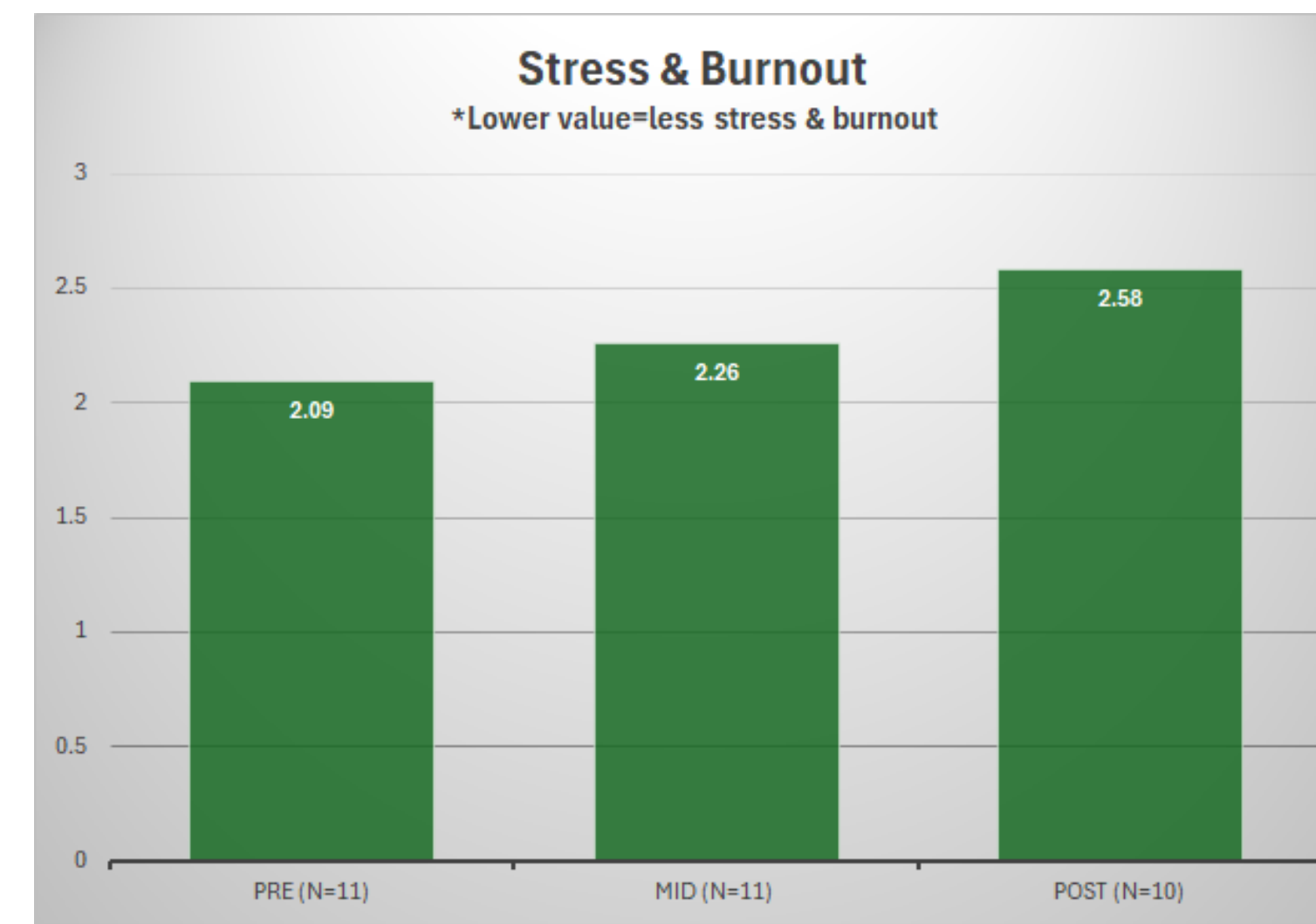
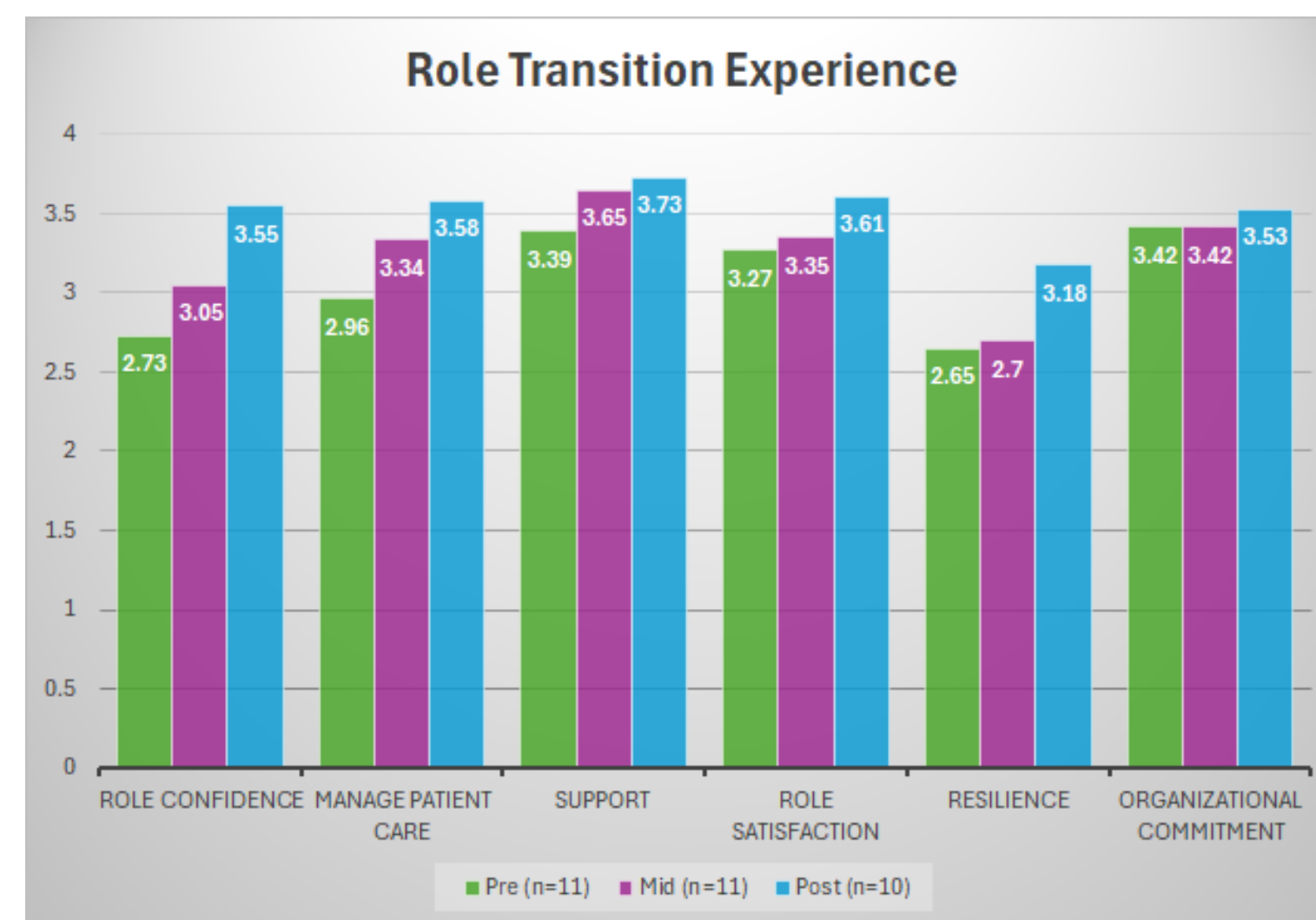
Evaluation Method:

The "Casey-Fink Graduate Nurse Experience Survey© (revised 2023)" was administered at three key intervals: pre-intervention (within 2 weeks of starting orientation), mid-intervention (at 6 weeks), and post-intervention (within 4 weeks of completing orientation).

This tool is an updated version of the validated tool, "Casey-Fink Graduate Nurse Experience Survey © 2006" measuring role transition experience, offering quantitative data for analysis.

Primary Outcomes

| | Outcome Achieved |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Nursing internship participants self-identified an overall positive role transition experience, with the exception of an increase in reported stress and burnout | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Nursing internship participants self-identified a decline in preceptorship supports throughout the course of the program | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Nursing internship participants self-identified increased confidence level in skills development | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |



Results using the Casey-Fink Graduate Nurse Experience Survey© (revised 2023)

Conclusion

Overall, the additional resources provided to NLNs through the pediatric general care nursing internship program in the July 2024 cohort resulted in improvements of skills and confidence assisting in a successful transition to independent nursing practice for 10 of 11 participants. Anecdotally, there was also an overall positive response from NLNs and preceptors to this program.

Key elements contributing to this success include the following:

1. **Additional education days with the hospital-wide cohort group** - Improved learning and adaptation to hospital-specific practices.
2. **Extended time with preceptors** – Offered guidance and personalized feedback.
3. **Peer support within the cohort group** - Fostered a collaborative environment for sharing experiences and emotional support.
4. **Opportunities for discussion** - Encouraged reflection and knowledge assimilation.

Future Considerations

Due to the risk for increased stress and burnout with this transition, NLNs may benefit from the following:

- Stress First Aid classes within the first year after completing orientation
- One-on-one mentoring to help with role transition from completion of orientation through the first year of independent practice
- Institutional virtual Transition-to-Practice program (3 sessions)

Invest additional time to better support preceptor group that includes resources for debriefing, encourages a unit culture of mutual respect and reviewing skills as a group of general care units to ensure standardization.

Contact Information

Laura Hailes, BSN, RN, CPN-laurabur@med.umich.edu

Lina Clark, BSN, RN, BMTCN, CPHON-lkapadia@med.umich.edu

Alex Rossmassler, BSN, RN-linalexa@med.umich.edu

Mindy Weed, BSN, RN, CPN-meliann@med.umich.edu

Acknowledgments

Joe Cleary, MA, BSN, RN, CPN, CNML
12 West Clinical Nursing Director

Jackie Turner, MSN, RN, CNML
11 West Clinical Nursing Supervisor

Samantha Judkins, MSN, RN, CNML
11 West Clinical Nursing Director

Julie L. Juno-LaPan, MS, BSN, RN, CNML, NE-BC
7 East Clinical Nursing Director

References

