Empowering nurses to support survivors of sexual assault

The majority of women, children and men who are sexually assaulted have to travel out of their hometown for treatment from someone with specialized training. Although one in six women and one in 33 men will experience an attempted or completed rape, there are only about 1,500 sexual assault nurse examiners in the country.

Capitalizing on an initial grant and a second $1.5 million, three-year HRSA grant, VUSN is building upon prior work to expand the offerings of its SANE education program, which is increasing the number of advanced practice registered nurses who have been SANE-trained and certified. This second grant allows VUSN to expand its curriculum to include telehealth care with existing equipment available in low-resourced locations and expanded simulations on how to provide essential care to persons who have been sexually assaulted. The program is arranging 40-hour clinical preceptorships at high-volume forensic nurse exam sites where trainees can work toward achieving clinical competencies. In the first two years of the program, graduates have obtained clinical experience at sites in Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee and those completing the SANE program practice in 16 states and Washington, D.C.

SANE-trained nurses have specialized education to conduct forensic examinations that have been shown to provide better physical and mental health care for assault survivors, deliver better evidence collection, and support higher prosecution rates. They treat patients holistically, with compassionate and comprehensive care that considers the patient's current acute care needs and the possible long-term effects of sexual assault.
**HRSA awards more than $630K to School of Nursing for future faculty**

Vanderbilt University School of Nursing has received a $630,278 grant from the HRSA Nurse Faculty Loan Program to support Doctor of Nursing Practice students who are interested in becoming nursing faculty members. The award brings the total funds the school has received for the NFLP program since 2008 to more than $10 million. Health care experts nationwide have warned that, with the growing and aging needs of our population, the demand for nurses will only intensify. Yet, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing reports that nursing schools turn away thousands of qualified applicants each year, often due to lack of faculty. Supported by the NFLP, Vanderbilt is responding to the need for increased numbers of doctorally prepared faculty by growing its Ph.D. in Nursing Science program and its DNP program. In the last 10 years, VUSN has produced 405 graduates who have participated in the NFLP.

**Integrating needed mental health care in a primary care setting**

VUSN and nonprofit housing organization Urban Housing Solutions operate a nurse-led, team-based primary care safety-net clinic in Nashville. Vanderbilt Primary Care (formerly the Clinic at Mercury Court) was launched in 2012 with a HRSA Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development grant focused on interprofessional collaborative practice. The nurse-led clinic has made significant strides in improving the health of its community.

Last year, 1,363 low-income or disadvantaged patients received psychiatric or behavioral counseling services through the clinic or partner practices. An additional 378 patients were seen for major psychiatric conditions, managed either at the clinic or by community psychiatric care partners. Overall, 81 percent of patients saw improvement in depression and anxiety. In those routine visits, 78 patients screened positive as having suicidal ideas and the clinic team was able to respond accordingly with care. The majority of those patients came to the clinic for medical, not mental health, purposes, which indicates that primary care sites can be excellent gatekeepers for patients in need of mental health services. This patient population included unhoused and formerly unhoused individuals, non-English speakers and those living below the poverty level. Of those, 56 percent were uninsured and 31 percent reported they had been unhoused within the past 12 months.

**Collaborative Academic Practice program**

In August 2019, the school received a three-year $2.7 million award from HRSA to support the development of a learning track within VUSN's family nurse practitioner program to focus specific education on serving rural and underserved populations. The award is also being used to grow and build collaborations with health agencies such as community-based and federally qualified health centers as sites providing clinical training for the program's students. Funded under HRSA’s Advanced Nursing Education Workforce initiative, the Collaborative Academic-Practice Program is recruiting and graduating specialty-trained FNPs over the course of the grant. The program's FNP learning track includes advanced integrated health education focusing on telehealth, social determinants of health, and expanded psychopharmacologic knowledge that supports behavioral health. Since its inception, 27 students have completed the CAP program. According to post-graduation survey data, approximately 70 percent of the cohort are working in primary care settings. Half of the cohort is working in a rural or underserved community.

**Addressing the nation’s shrinking nursing workforce**

In the last 10 years, VUSN has produced 470 DNP graduates and 41 Ph.D. graduates. VUSN started the DNP program in 2008 to increase the number of doctorally trained nurses who can serve as faculty in nursing schools, part of the solution to the increasing demand for more nursing students. Since the school began the program, 475 persons of color have earned DNP degrees from Vanderbilt.

Since 2010, 4,405 Master of Science in Nursing students have graduated from VUSN. School of Nursing graduates can be found in rural and urban areas, with alumni in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and U.S. territories. More than 40 percent of VUSN alumni provide health care in rural and underserved areas.

Other Title VIII grants helped VUSN launch its Nurse-Midwifery specialty in 2000. That program has been ranked as the No. 1 nurse-midwifery education program in the U.S. since 2015.

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FY 2021