Veteran’s Health Administration (VA) National Quality Scholars (VAQS) Fellowship Program: The Second Year

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Objectives

1. Briefly describe the National VA Quality Scholars Program.

2. Discuss the history of this program and its association with The Dartmouth Institute.

3. Discuss the interprofessional nature of the curriculum.

4. Explain outcomes thus far for nurses enrolled in the Fellowship.

5. Review future opportunities.
Fellowship Aims

• To apply knowledge and methods of health care improvement to the care of veterans.
• To innovate and continually improve health care.
• To teach health professionals in an interprofessional setting about health care improvement.
• To perform research and develop new knowledge for the ongoing improvement of the quality and value of health care services.
• To enrich VHA’s clinical workforce with experts in research and application of quality improvement skills.
End of Fellowship Competencies

- Systems-based practice
- Practice-based learning and improvement
- Interpersonal communication skills
- Inter-professional work and learning
- Research skills
- Professionalism
Fellowship History

• VA National Quality Scholars Fellowship Program (VAQS) collaboration of Dartmouth faculty & the VA Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) began in 1998

• 2-year post-residency fellowship for physicians interested in further developing the scholarship of the improvement of health care

• First Fellows enrolled in 1999; five sites

• In 2009, nurses were included as pre- and post-doctoral (both PhD and DNP)

• Six sites now involved nationally

• First Fellows graduated in 2001; currently 86 alumni
Structure

- At each site:
  - 2 Senior Scholars (faculty)
  - Additional faculty
  - 6 fellows (4 MD, 2 RN)
  - VA Facility, University, VA Network

- Program totals
  - Capacity for 36 fellows at given time
  - Last 4 yrs – 90% at capacity
  - 5 nurses began in 2009
  - 6 nurses began in 2010
  - 3 to begin in 2011
Educational Design

1. **Fellow Projects**
   - Local, regional, national
   - Site faculty, leaders, staff

2. **Video-Conference Curriculum (25/year)**

3. **Face-to-Face Meetings**
   - National
   - Dartmouth faculty, many others
   - National guests/leaders, alums

4. **Other Learning**
   - Masters programs
   - VA or other experiences (e.g. RCA)
Fellow Projects (Examples)

• Using Theory of Constraints and Systems Thinking to Improve Performance in a Primary Care Clinic
• Conflict Facilitation Service: The Nurse-Resident Council
• Suicide Prevention in VA and Beyond: Seeking Quality and Outcomes Indicators
• Redesigned Ward Nursing Work Flow to Increase Time at the Bedside
• Hospital Readmissions: Are They Bad, and If So, How Can We Prevent Them?
• Minimizing the Risk of Retained Sponges after Surgery
• Nurses’ Role in Improving Blood Transfusion Safety
• Improving Patient Safety through Accurate Resident Handoffs
Video-Conference Curriculum Topics

• Introduction and Logistics; Systems Failure, Medical Errors
• Quality Is Personal
• Prior Leaders of Improvement
• Health Care as a System; VA as a System
• Personal Improvement Projects
• Process and Outcomes Thinking
• Change Concepts
• Learning Cycles for Improvement
• Variation & Statistical Process Control
• Benchmarking
• Understanding Patient Perspectives
• Analyzing Satisfaction Data
Video-Conference Curriculum Topics

- Financial Data and Cost Analysis
- Working Together, Collaboration
- Conflict Management, Negotiation Theory
- Teaching and Learning
- Research Design for Improvement Work
- Ethics and Quality Improvement
- Models for Understanding Complexity
- The Microsystem Model
- High Performing Microsystems
- Making Change in a Microsystem
- Measurement of Microsystem Performance
- Competencies & Educational Evaluation
- Strategic and Organizational Improvement
Face-to-Face Meetings

- Practical knowledge about improving care
- Interprofessional learning
- Scholarship and research about improving care
- Personal and professional growth
- Building a learning community for the Fellowship Program
Face-to-Face Meetings: Interprofessional Activities

- Director of Clinical Practice for VA’s Office of Nursing Services presented at Summer Institute 2010
  - Maximizing Interprofessional Work in the Patient Centered Medical Home
  - The Clinical Nurse Leader Role
- Exercises in working in teams: Scavenger Hunt at Dartmouth
- Nurse/Physician Teams (first year Fellows): Observations and Poster Presentations
  - Nurse-to-nurse and physician to physician handoffs (2009)
  - Discharge planning (nurse; physician) (2010)
Other Learning

- MPH Degree; MS in Clinical Investigation
- On-site lectures and other activities
- Teaching opportunities at VA and affiliate schools
- Involvement in mentor’s research
- Team member, Healthcare Failure Mode and Effect Analyses, RCAs
- The Joint Commission mock survey and prep teams
Outcomes: Fellow Publications

- 170 articles in peer-reviewed journals in 2007-2010
- Journal examples:
  - Academic Medicine
  - Annals of Internal Medicine
  - Implementation Science
  - JAMA
  - Journal of General Internal Medicine
  - Journal of the American College of Surgeons
  - New England Journal of Medicine
  - Pediatrics
  - Quality and Safety in Health Care
  - Health Services Research
Outcomes: Success of Graduates (June 2010)

- Enrolled 98 fellows since 1999 (physicians)
  - 86 have completed the program, including 11 fellows who finished in June 2010
  - Currently 10 fellows enrolled in the program in year 2; 9 nurses currently in program

- Summary of the program graduates’ positions:
  - 17% (15 of 86) of graduates have a current training position (7 in VA);
  - 33% (28 of 86) of graduates have a current VA faculty/staff position;
  - 60% (52 of 86) of graduates are in academic faculty positions;
  - 81% (70 of 86) of graduates are in positions doing clinical or research work related to the improvement of health care.
Examples of Leadership

- Hospital leadership roles in clinical or quality improvement activities
- Received Career Development Awards
- Leaders in public health organizations
- Quality Management Officers in VA Networks
- Deans in medical education
- VA National Leader of Medication Reconciliation
- Director of Quality Improvement, US Army
- White House Fellow
Nurse Outcomes: Three 2010 Nursing Graduates

- US Public Health Service, Commissioned Corps Officer
- Assistant Professor, University of Iowa
- Assistant Professor, Vanderbilt University School of Nursing and Co-director of the Detection of Early Lung Cancer among Military Personnel (DECAMP) program, a multi-site DoD grant
Nurse Outcomes: 2009-2011

- Degrees – 2 DNPs
- Publications - 4; 3 in press; 5 submitted; 2 book chapters
- National Presentations
  - Academy of Healthcare Improvement
  - QSEN National Conference: 2010 and 2011
  - Gerontological Society of America
  - American Assoc of Critical Care Nurses’ (NTI)
  - American Academy of Nursing
  - Association of peri-Operative RNs
- Grant Submissions 3; 1 funded
- QI Projects
- Academic Contributions
Fellows’ Evaluation Comments Regarding Inclusion of Nurses

- “What a rich program! . . . VAQS seems to be leading the pack in interdisciplinary collaboration.”

- “Please keep the nurses involved. They’re great!”

- “I think that adding the nurses was a fantastic aspect of the program. I think it provides a potential for collaboration and mentorship that needs to be explored and exploited more.”

- “. . . The interdisciplinary nature . . . as well as the expert guidance and mentoring . . . contributed to an excellent learning experience.”

- “Should not focus too much on interprofessional topics . . . We were trying to force it...I think the learning and discussion will come naturally among our group . . .”
Potential of VA Quality Scholars Training for Leadership Development in Nursing Quality & Safety

- Next generation of nursing quality and safety leaders in both academic and practice organizations
- Next generation of policy leaders for nursing in quality and safety
- Increase our contribution to scholarship and knowledge development for quality and safety
- Develop interprofessional collaborations for improving quality and safety in healthcare
Future Directions

- Addition of new sites
- Possible increase in numbers at existing sites
- VA committed to maintaining nursing involvement in VAQS Program
- Marketing (recruiting is biggest challenge)
Eligibility Criteria

• 2-year interdisciplinary fellowship at one of the 6 sites in the country.
• DNP or PhD Pre- or Post-doctoral candidates eligible, enrolled at local site affiliate university.
• Receive a stipend from the VA while enrolled in the program.
• Do not have to be a VA employee to be eligible.
• Do not have a VA obligation at completion.
For more information regarding program and application process:

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*Nurse Leader Contacts at each site:*
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Dartmouth-Hitchcock Hospital
University of Alabama, Birmingham
University of California, San Francisco
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Vanderbilt University
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