

## RIG Symposium E5: Theory RIG: Transitions from Phenomenon to Program of Research

### *On Becoming a Flexible Pool Nurse: Expansion of the Meleis Transition Framework*Error! Bookmark not defined.

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**Purpose:** To explore the personal and professional developmental process that accrues as academic medical clinical nurses transition practice from a specialty specific identity to a flexible nursing practice and a redefined identity.

**Background:** Adequate nurse-to-patient ratios in acute care have been shown to be a key factor in improving quality of patient outcomes (Needleman, et al, 2002). Variable censuses, fluctuations in acuity and nurse shortages, have challenged nurse administrators to maintain ratios. In 2004, IOM report "Keeping Patient's Safe: Transforming the Work" stated that internal, flexible pool replacement nurses are safer than external agency nurses. In response to this 2004 information, the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania developed the internal flexible pool "Staffing For All Seasons (SFAS)."

**Methods:** A qualitative methodology with 14 semi-structured items and an open-ended format was developed. Content validity was established by an independent PhD psychologist. A sample (n=82) of SFAS nurses were invited via email to participate. 72% rate was accomplished. Data clusters for similar responses were compiled and emerging themes were identified and categorized.

**Results:** The data suggest the SFAS transition involved multiple patterns depended not only on personal and professional development but transitional changes in life situations. Facilitators, inhibitors, and patterns of response were identified. Overall consensus was the role required them (1) to be "more attentive and careful", (2) to be "in a constant state of learning" and (3) to be "constantly researching different patterns of patient illness and wellness".

**Complications and Implications:** The study provides valuable insights for nurse administrators on the types of issues and adoptive mechanisms internal, flexible pool nurses address and manage shift to shift. Their findings infer that the Meleis Transitional Framework (Meleis, et al, 2000) provides guidance for the development of orientation, education and ongoing competency needs for internal, flexible pool nurses. Future implications include queries such as (1) how does this type of nurse impact patient care, (2) does this nurse approach influence turnover and vacancy, and (3) is this approach cost effective?