In January 2012 HNTC developed a strategy to assess and address concerns of a TB program. The HNTC, state TB program, and local health department management were all involved in the planning effort. The goal was to provide training and mentoring to new nursing staff to improve their confidence and ability to manage TB clinical issues as soon as possible. HNTC assessed and evaluated the current nursing knowledge and practice skills using a nurse competency assessment tool previously adapted for use in Texas. Each nurse self-assessed competency of their current skills and knowledge in the following areas:

- Understanding the diagnosis & treatment of active TB disease and ZI/BI
- Identifying recent TB infection and conducting contact investigation
- Assessing potential for non-adherence
- Determining need for situation precautions and potential for community transmission
- Identifying psychosocial issues as potential barriers to treatment and adherence

Training and assistance for the health department nurses was developed based on deficiencies identified by the planning committee and the nurse competency assessment tool.

Results

- Collaboration between local, regional, and state health department nurses has improved
- Decreased HNTC nursing consultation and technical assistance
- Recent requests for medical consultation from HNTC are related to complicated TB cases
- Cohort review process has been implemented
- A TB nurse expert has been identified who is now able to provide TB training and mentoring
- Enhanced nurse competence/nurse case management skills

Nurse-to-Nurse Mentoring

Nurse to nurse mentoring provided professional support, guidance, and shared knowledge of nurse case management and technical assistance related to tuberculosis in these areas:

- Screening
- Reporting a new case
- Physical assessment
- Infection control measures and respiratory isolation
- Treatment regimen
- Administration of medications
- Identifying and managing drug toxicities and drug interactions
- Monitoring response to treatment
- Management of co-morbidities during treatment
- Psychosocial management and identifying barriers to adherence
- Interpreting lab results and radiology reports
- Specimen collection and interpreting bacteriology reports
- Treatment education
- Contact investigation
- Collaborating with other healthcare providers

Intervention Timeline

Through interventions used for this group, HNTC has effectively trained and mentored TB nurses who lacked TB knowledge. These methods can be adapted to form a model for meeting the education needs of a TB control program which can be adapted to the needs of a local TB program.

Evidence of Impact

- 100% of nurses were able to identify and efficaciously address major TB case management issues.
- HNTC received rave reviews for competency testing sessions.
- Nurse competency testing improved TB management.

Conclusion

"Heartland has always been extremely helpful. They are available and provide help in a timely manner. All the staff at Heartland is knowledgeable and they ensure the information they provide to us is understood. They are friendly and make you feel welcomed to ask any questions."

"In my time with the TB program, I felt that Heartland always was and always will be there for us. I never hesitated to ask for assistance whether for consults or general information. Heartland was always my number one resource, as a nurse it is important to have that support."

Debbie Onofre, RN, BSN, Catalina Navarro, RN, BSN, Jessica Quintero, BAAS, Alydia Wayne and Barbara Seaworth, MD
Heartland National TB Center

Cohort 4

An effective tuberculosis (TB) control program requires personnel with knowledge and expertise of the full complement of TB program activities. Experienced TB nurses are the foundation of an effective TB control program. Health departments are losing the experienced workforce that has sustained TB programs. When an experienced nurse is lost, the health department is challenged with providing immediate TB training for newly hired nurses who have no TB background and lacks the skills to provide adequate TB case management. As new TB nurses gain experience and expertise they become integral to successful treatment and management of the TB patient.

As part of an effort to meet the immediate training needs for a health department which lost key nursing personnel and expertise, the Heartland National TB Center developed a comprehensive plan to provide “Just in Time” training to newly hired TB nurses.

Evaluation of Health Department Strengths and Weaknesses

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Methods

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Introduction

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Cohort Study Modules

1. Introduction to NCM Online
2. NCM Funds Management
3. NCM Program Management
4. NCM Data Management
5. NCM Case Management
6. NCM Communication Skills
7. NCM Interpersonal Skills

Conclusions

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