

Quality Improvement

ABSTRACT TITLE: CVCU H.E.A.R.T. Helping Employees Achieve Recovery Together: A Peer Support Program

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Background: Cardiovascular surgical (CV) nurses conducted a survey in June 2013, of the 20 nurses surveyed, 16 (80%) experienced a traumatic event. A follow up question revealed that 10 of the 16 employees (63%) reported they were unaware of the second victim phenomenon, and the free professional help that was available for coping with traumatic events encountered on the unit. Two nurses reviewed the literature and discovered the benefits of the use of professional debriefing programs with peers.

Purpose: In response, the clinical nurses created the H.E.A.R.T. program (Helping Employees Achieve Recovery Together). The overall goal was to increase awareness of the second-victim phenomenon and the effects of repeated traumatic events on the healthcare worker.

Methods/Strategy: Nine trained peer supporters are available by phone 24 hours a day 7 days a week. When the team is activated, a confidential debriefing session occurs and is directly focused on the emotional support of the staff member. Information is given for the hospital supported employee assistance program, when the staff member wishes to explore professional avenues of coping with the problem. In addition, someone from the peer supporter follows up with the staff member within three days.

Results: Eight months after the initiation of the H.E.A.R.T. program, nurse leaders repeated the survey were 100% of the staff members reported peer support was available for emotional traumas. Over the past year and a half other units have activated the program, which opens the idea of making the program available to the entire organization.

Conclusion: CVCU H.E.A.R.T. has provided awareness of the second victim phenomenon and the resources available to staff members. There is an increase in emotional support, which will aid in decreasing burnout and increase job satisfaction. The ultimate goal is to increase employee satisfaction, employee retention and in turn, patient satisfaction.