Caring Theory and HeartMath: A Match Made in Heaven

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Background: At Chesapeake Regional Medical Center (CRMC), the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) created the Professional Nursing Council (PNC), which is a governing body to help create more involvement from nursing when it comes to nursing practice. In the Fall of 2008, the PNC decided to adopt a nursing theorist to help guide their practice and with input of the bedside nurses, they chose Jean Watson's Theory of Caring.

Jean Watson's theory was well-received, and nurses were eager to bring care back to the bedside but were struggling with how to incorporate the theory in an already overwhelming work environment. Our CNO went to a conference and met Robert Browning and found out about HeartMath. She thought this would be a good thing to bring to CRMC because the nurses have tremendous demands put on them and are feeling more stressed and overwhelmed than ever.

A HeartMath steering committee was developed and created a plan to get as many nurses signed up for HeartMath as possible within a year. Several nurses were trained to teach the HeartMath workshop to accomplish this goal.

As we presented HeartMath, we introduced it as a modality to the Jean Watson Theory of Caring. The motto was, "You have to take care of yourself before you can take care of others." The first half of the workshop focused on the science and the HeartMath tools. We felt it was important to keep that as the foundation of the workshop. However, we felt it important to introduce Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring and her 10 Caritas processes into the class and show how they are related.

In October 2010, CRMC hosted the annual Caritas Consortium in Norfolk, Virginia. Two trainers taught HeartMath to a roomful of Caritas coaches as a pre-conference event. The trainers were then able to experience the consortium and realized even more how much HeartMath and the Theory of Caring are intertwined. At this time, it was decided that HeartMath and Jean Watson's Theory should be "married."

On November 17, 2010, the first HeartMath-Caritas Committee meeting commenced.

Method: Quantitative, using Personal and Organizational Quality Assessment (POQA)

Results: The first group to be taught HeartMath was the nursing leadership group in January 2009. POQA results appear in Figure 1. In phase two, we trained more than 850 employees (863 completed the pre-POQA, and 792 completed the post-POQA). The results are displayed in Figure 2.

Conclusion: As a result of incorporating Caritas processes into the HeartMath Workshop, the executive team at HeartMath has created a workshop called "Revitalizing Care," which integrates the Caring Theory into the HeartMath concepts and tools. Care practice plans are built into the workshop to allow more time to have everyone work together to integrate the keys and skills into their work and personal lives, as well as to provide a chance to make connections with the Caring Theory.

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ABSTRACTS

Figure 1 POQA results from nursing leadership.

Figure 2 POQA results for the nursing department.