

Final Summary Report

HST 4275- Health Studies Internship

Harmony Naples – Intern

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Gottlieb Memorial Hospital

Employee Health Services

Melrose Park, IL

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Structure and Function of the Agency

My internship took place at Gottlieb Memorial Hospital (GMH). This 250 bed hospital is a not-for-profit, community hospital, and has recently become part of the Loyola University Health Care System. The benefit of the union between Gottlieb and Loyola is that there is more personal and intimate care of the community hospital along with the resources of a teaching hospital. Loyola has been known for its research, technology, and new advances. The hospital would not function without the help from all the employees, housekeeping, security, transporters, nurses, doctors, administration, etc.

During my internship I have been stationed in the Employee Health Services (EHS) department. EHS is a department within the organization. EHS works under the direction of the Human Resource department and it is staffed by two registered nurses who have a wide scope of practice. The nurses that work in this department have had a lot of experience prior to coming to this area. One of the nurses has experience in home health and is certified in orthopedics, while the other nurse has worked in the ER and in labor and delivery and she is a certified critical care and trauma nurse. They both are members of the professional organization known as the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN). They are also part of the Infection Control committee and the Safety committee for the hospital. They possess good communication skills and work well together, yet they both have their own specialized areas that demonstrate their autonomy.

The objective of EHS is to provide a safe and healthy work environment for the workers. The EHS nurses are continually designing programs to assist the employees of developing or maintaining healthy lifestyles. Some of the ways they reach out to the

employees is by offering a variety of different health screenings throughout the year. The challenges in this area is that there are employees that work evening and night shifts so it is important that they are not excluded from the health promotion programs due to their work schedules. Because of the different work schedules in the hospital, it is common for the EHS nurses to either stay late or arrive early so all of the employees are reached.

EHS is responsible for providing all employees and volunteers with the same quality care that the public receives. The following areas of care is generated from EHS: flu program/campaign, regulatory immunization program, workers compensation/case management, managing all work related injuries, illness, and exposures, collecting and recording statistical data, maintaining and monitoring compliance of infection control guidelines, minimal lift/safe patient handling program, and health promotion and wellness programs. If there is a service that an employee needs that it is not provided by the hospital it is EHS' responsibility to provide an alternative resource to that employee.

Description of Experiences and Activities

Throughout my internship I was exposed to several activities that helped me gain a better understanding of what the Employee Health Services nurses are responsible for. A majority of my internship was spent following Teresa because she handles most of the wellness promotion for this department.

A typical day for my internship starts with filing papers and removing termed employee files from the active files. We then go to the two units to monitor the pilot study on a new piece of equipment to see how the product is being received by the staff. The pilot study is arranged if the hospital is interested in the equipment that the vendor is offering. After checking the status and feedback of the demo equipment we check the mail and then return to the office to enter the new fit test data. The fit test is required every year from most, if not all, employees so it is important to keep up on the status of the employee's health for the records.

On Mondays and Wednesdays Teresa and I go down to the ER for the new employee physicals. Each new employee is given a physical before starting their job to be sure they are capable of working. The physicals include vital signs check, vision test, urine drug screen, and the physical examination. When the physicals are done we come back to the office and Teresa finishes the new employees' paperwork while I begin filing the new employee paperwork. When all of that is done we usually stop at central supply to pick up any supplies needed for the office.

About three days a week we make rounds to check the status of the equipment. If any of the equipment is broken we will either call maintenance to tell them the problem, or we bring the equipment down to the maintenance department. We will also check the

inspection dates of the equipment. If there are any changes found on the equipment during rounds I update the spreadsheet to keep up with the inspection dates.

I experienced several other activities that were not done daily, such as counseling chronically ill employees, worksite evaluations, orientation and skills lab, and planning upcoming wellness screenings. Most of the counseling for the chronically ill employees was for employees that are diabetic. The counseling consisted of inquiry of problems and eating habits, establishing and attending an appointment with the nutritionist, and following up to see how the balance of medicine and food is working out for that employee.

The worksite evaluation I attended was for an employee that was complaining of back pain when sitting at her desk. This employee is stationed in the home health office which is located on the Melrose Park campus so Teresa, JoAnn, a physical therapist, and I all walked over to the office so the employee could be observed in her office. The physical therapist took several measurements of the employee, like the distance from her eyes to the computer screen, the distance from her chair to the desk, and the distance from her chair to the floor. These measurements were compared to the measurements that are standard for a worksite. After a few adjustments were made for that employee's office area we scheduled an appointment to reevaluate her condition and worksite.

The orientation of all new employees is important so the lift equipment policies and procedures can be taught and explained to the new employees. After the employees attend orientation they will be required to attend a skills lab which tests their competencies on the lift equipment. For this program I helped Teresa prepare by putting

together the evaluation packets and helping her gather the lift equipment from different units so the employees will be able to demonstrate how to properly use the equipment.

Planning for upcoming wellness screenings was a big part of this internship. With flu season almost here Teresa and Joann wanted to get a head start. Every year they offer free flu shots to all employees and volunteers, so I assisted with making fliers to post around the hospital telling the location details. Along with flu season we worked on a few other programs. Teresa and Joann have a calendar that tells them the health issue for every month of the year so we planned a few programs based off of the calendar (for example October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month). They are currently still working and planning for the flu campaign and breast cancer screenings.

One of my favorite experiences of the internship was visiting the Wound Clinic. While in the Wound Clinic I got to see the hyperbaric chambers, which I was not familiar with prior to this experience. During my visit I spoke with one of the Wound Clinic doctors that explained to me how the pressure in the hyperbaric chambers along with the high levels of oxygen promotes faster healing. The doctor also told me that there are currently studies being done to see if the hyperbaric chambers would help limit the paralysis in stroke victims. The thought behind that is if the stroke victim is exposed to the high levels of oxygen immediately after a stroke the oxygen may reach the deprived part of the brain fast enough to reverse some of the effects of the stroke. All of this was really interesting to me and I was happy to witness something I have never seen before.

Perceptions and Judgments about the Internship

I truly learned a lot during my internship. I got to see how the promotion of wellness is very important in the work place and how it is beneficial to insurance companies. I learned a lot about lift equipment for nurses, which is something I had no prior experience with. I believe doing my internship in a hospital was a great experience because I was exposed to such a variety of people and illnesses. This internship also allowed me to become more aware of what kind of job I could obtain with my degree.

I think my program planning skills were very useful during my internship. Program Planning is a big part of what the EHS nurses do so I felt confident helping with some of the upcoming programs that they were planning for. I often helped them by looking up information for them to include in brochures for the program and I also helped out a lot with designing the fliers that announced the program. Although the program planning we did in class helped prepare me for the programs they were planning I also learned a lot about how they got the attention of their audience and some of the steps it takes to get everything in place for a larger size program.

During my internship it definitely would have been more helpful to have a background in nursing just because both of my preceptors are nurses. Even though I did not attend nursing school I still felt that I was able to assist them with several projects and I was still able to relate to a lot of their work, especially the wellness side. Both of my preceptors have a lot of experience in this area and were very knowledgeable and helpful to me as a student. I had a great experience interning in the Employee Health Services department and I would highly recommend this site to another student. I really enjoyed

getting to experience so many different things and I think other students would find it worth-while too.