Innovative approaches to combating global chronic disease involve transforming our preventative approaches to health. As the number of chronically ill escalates, our lens of perception may need to be shifted to think in terms of better engagement and empowerment of patient choices.

The economic burden of chronic disease management in the United States has reached staggering statistics. For example, despite spending more than $32 billion per year on statins, coronary heart disease has continued to grow at accelerating rates since 1983–up 85 percent (Hyman, Ornish, & Roizen, 2009). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2009, more than 75 percent of U.S. healthcare costs were related to chronic conditions: “Growing evidence indicates that a comprehensive approach to prevention can save tremendous costs and needless suffering” (NCCDPHP, 2009, p.2). Recent federal and state policies, including the Affordable Care Act, have suggested pursuing the expanded use of shared decision making as a way to improve quality and patient satisfaction in population health.

Health coaching focuses on a person’s priorities and goals rather than simply on how the healthcare system defines its own needs for successful outcomes. In order to assist people to improve their health behaviors, it is necessary to use a person-centered approach and engage them in discussion of the values, goals and barriers impacting their individual choices. Employing integrated, holistic communication skills, such as deep listening, relevant use of language, powerful questions, and direct communication, allows patients to fully explore and articulate what they hope to achieve through the coaching relationship.

As people embark on exploring new ways to approach health and illness, holistic nurses have a unique opportunity to be change catalysts. Helping others tap into their inner wisdom is an exciting discovery of strengths, fears, values, and healthier ways of being. We are all creatures of habit…and maybe there needs to be a “conscious uncoupling” of those habits that do not serve us. Why does there need to be a wake-up call of an unwanted diagnosis in order for people to become conscious about healthier lifestyle choices and behaviors?

Nurse coaching helps keep people accountable. Forging new paths may not be comfortable for some. It requires stretching—physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It requires digging—sometimes in the mud of our own procrastination or resistance—to uncover a clearer understanding of what supports and sustains our health and wellness. Coaches help identify the paradoxes that exist within us. Developing a plan to reach a goal will include the critical steps of dealing with personal paradoxes.

The art of guiding others to learn new health behaviors, make choices, and discover insights is based on the
premise that deep down each client knows the best life choices for him/herself. Actualizing human potential requires conscious choices that involve setting goals, taking action steps, re-evaluating priorities, and developing awareness, discipline and persistence. Assessing our own values and desires can provide the needed clarity for changing perceptions and behavior.

New Frontiers for Nurse Coaching

Nurse coaching represents many geographic areas of the globe. And while healthcare practices may vary, core values of coaching transcend geography. Mutual respect and joint decision making and action are central issues that create accountability and the ability to achieve success. In spite of cultural differences, nurse coaching has resonated with holistic nurses as a fulfilling path of practice. In the United States with the advent of the Affordable Care Act and Accountable Care Organizations, many employers are valuing the nurse coach relationship to engage people in making positive healthcare behavior changes. Patients, providers and employers recognize the benefits of coaching and the cost savings in a healthier and more productive workforce. Navigating the new frontiers of coaching may take creativity, innovation and trust in a brave, new worldview for nursing.

Nurse Coaching Certification

Since the launch of certification in 2013, nurses ranging from New York to New Zealand have become board-certified in nurse coaching through the American Holistic Nurses Credentialing Corporation (AHNCC). There has also been interest in coaching certification from holistic nurses in Japan, Canada and Sweden. Currently, there are 139 board-certified Nurse Coaches working in diverse practice settings and job responsibilities, from the bedside to private practice. While becoming certified is an individual decision, the process is both personally and professionally rewarding.

References


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News from AHNCC

IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR AHN-BC NURSES WITH APRN STATUS:
Effective Immediately Through March 31, 2015

Background

In January 2012, the American Holistic Nurses Credentialing Corporation (AHNCC) initiated a certification program for Advanced Practice Holistic Nursing including criteria as follows: AHNCC Certified Advanced Practice Holistic Nurse with APRN status (APHN-BC) requires competency in all competencies relevant to Advanced Holistic Nursing (AHN-BC), plus competencies specific to APRN status. Two pathways for certification were planned to facilitate those who were already certified as an AHN-BC nurse: Path 1 is for candidates who qualified for APHN-BC certification and were not certified as an AHN-BC while Path 2 was for those currently certified as an AHN-BC.

AHNCC Board Decisions

The pilot phase of the process, which was launched in February 2013, has now been completed. The APHN-BC examination with Path 1 and 2 has been offered three times over the past year (February 2013, September 2013, and February 2014). Analysis of the candidates’ qualifications, scores, item-analysis, and review of the testing process has resulted in the following AHNCC Board decisions.

• Path 1 will continue as it currently exists for all nurses seeking APHN-BC status who are not currently AHN-BC certified.
• Path 2 will be discontinued, effective April 11, 2014. The 50-item examination will no longer be offered. A transitional phase will be offered to those who currently hold the AHN-BC and qualify for APHN-BC status as stated in the AHNCC Handbook.
• The Transitional Phase starts immediately and will continue through March 31, 2015. As of April 1, 2015, all candidates for APHN-BC certification must take the examination.
• During the year-long transitional phase, AHN-BC certified nurses who qualify for APHN-BC status may validate their competency as an APHN-BC by either taking the APHN-BC examination or demonstrating competency through an equivalent, alternative method.

Note: Effective April 1, 2015, Path 1 will be the only option for APHN Certification. All nurses who qualify for APHN status will be required to take the APHN examination.

Those interested in applying for the “equivalent, alternative method” can find the Application form and process by visiting www.ahncc.org/images/APHN_APPLICATION.doc