



THE INVERTED PYRAMID: LEADING TEAMS OF NOVICE NURSES

Nursing faces a structural crisis in many healthcare settings as patient acuity has risen and staff experience has declined. Historically, a solid base of veteran "expert" nurses supported a small group of novices. Today, the model has flipped into an inverted pyramid. Most frontline staff in acute care environments are now novices, supported by a shrinking minority of experienced clinicians. This shift erases "organic learning." Without a middle layer of experience, the burden of decision-making falls heavily on a few seasoned staff and leaders. Clinical intuition is scarce, necessitating explicit protocols, AI-driven alerts, and virtual nursing to prevent errors. This interactive workshop provides leaders and educators with concrete strategies to manage and coach "clinically young" teams. We will discuss how to build systems of safety and quality that substitute for traditional mentorship, ensuring high-standard care in an environment where experience is at a premium.

2 ½ Hour
Workshop Offered
Virtually or Onsite

Affordable Pricing

Customized to
Your Setting

Actionable Tools
and Strategies

Very Interactive

FACULTY

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The “Inverted Pyramid”: Leading Teams of Novice Nurses

Overview

Nursing faces a structural crisis in many healthcare settings as patient acuity has risen, and staff experience has declined. Historically, a solid base of veteran "expert" nurses supported a small group of novices. Today, the model has flipped into an inverted pyramid. Most frontline staff in acute care environments are now novices, supported by a shrinking minority of experienced clinicians. This shift erases "organic learning." Without a middle layer of experience, the burden of decision-making falls heavily on a few seasoned staff and leaders. Clinical intuition is scarce, necessitating explicit protocols, AI-driven alerts, and virtual nursing to prevent errors. This interactive workshop provides leaders and educators with concrete strategies to manage and coach "clinically young" teams. We will discuss how to build systems of safety and quality that substitute for traditional mentorship, ensuring high-standard care in an environment where experience is at a premium.

Workshop Objectives

1. Describe the nursing workforce demographic flip and new viewpoints about careers, resulting in an Inverted Pyramid of staff experience.
2. Compare the role of the nurse leader in the traditional staff pyramid versus the inverted staff pyramid.
3. Identify why a leader-coach mindset is critical to support teams of novice nurses.
4. Discuss mechanisms to build structural safety and cognitive support, such as clinical decision support huddles and leader rounding.
5. Examine ways to do a unit heat map to identify experience gaps and respond to danger zones in your schedules and assignments.
6. Provide strategies for managing the “experienced minority” to promote their engagement and prevent them from burning out.

Agenda

9:30 – 10:15 AM **The Inverted Pyramid versus Historical Nursing Models**

- The shift from a predominantly experienced acute care workforce to an inverted pyramid.
- The evidence on how nurses progress from novice to expert.
- How generational ideas about careers are impacting unit skill mix.
- Assessing skill mix gaps in units/departments.
- The role of leaders and educators as coaches in the inverted pyramid.

10:15 -10:45 AM **Building Cultures of Safety for Novice Nurses**

- Promoting critical thinking in novice staff.
- Creating environments of psychological safety where “I don’t know” is a celebrated safety catch.
- Implementing clinical decision support huddles, leader rounding and other systems to expedite learning.
- Examining ways that real-time AI prompts, just-in-time nudges, and clinical checklists can help reduce the cognitive load on novices.
- Coaching novice nurses to assess safety risks and the impact of quality metrics.
- Q+A

10:45 – 11:00 AM Break

11:00 – 12:00 PM Leadership Strategies to Manage the Inverted Pyramid

- Setting leader boundaries and expectations about accountability and performance.
- Maintaining quality and safety vigilance.
- Recognizing staff progress in achieving mastery.
- Leading your experienced minority.
- Retaining novice nurses as they gain experience.
- Leader Breakout Discussion
- Q+A and Evaluation

Rose O. Sherman, EdD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, is nationally known for helping current and future nursing leaders develop leadership and coaching skills. Rose is an emeritus professor at the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing at Florida Atlantic University and currently serves as a faculty member in the Marian K Shaughnessy Nursing Leadership Academy at Case Western Reserve University. Before becoming a faculty member, she was a nurse leader with the Department of Veterans Affairs for 25 years at five medical centers. Rose edits a popular leadership blog, www.emergingrnleader.com, read by thousands of nurse leaders each week, and was editor-in-chief for ten years of *Nurse Leader*, the official journal of the American Organization of Nurse Executives. She is a Gallup-certified strengths coach and author of *The Nurse Leader Coach: Become the Boss No One Wants to Leave*, *The Nuts and Bolts of Nursing Leadership*, *A Team Approach to Nursing Care Delivery*, and her newest book, *Nursing Leadership in the New World of Work*. Rose is a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing and is an alumnus of the Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellowship Program. In 2020, she was selected by the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses for their *Pioneering Spirit Award* in recognition of her groundbreaking work in nurse leader development. In 2025, the Association for Leadership Science in Nursing recognized Rose with a leadership legacy award for her contributions to the science of nursing leadership.