Assessing Internal Travel Nurses Clinical Knowledge: A Modern, Electronic Approach to Staffing Readiness

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Methods
System nursing leaders partnered with a vendor to address this issue. Mirroring external agency processes, we utilized an electronic method which included knowledge, skills, and critical thinking assessments. Teammates who scored at or above the national benchmark were considered proficient and offered a position in the department.

Results

- There was 30 pre-hire RN's and 12 internal Advocate Health RN's who completed assessments during the pilot (see fig. 1) comprised of 13 different specialties (see fig. 3).
- The electronic knowledge assessment averaged 3 hours to complete versus a paper checklist that could take 12 hours or more. Utilizing this strategy, orientation hours and costs were saved by avoiding the completion of a paper checklist alongside a dedicated preceptor. Nurses transitioned off orientation after one shift. Nurses transitioned off orientation after one shift.
  - Based on the high hourly rate of agency averaging $80 per hour, the cost avoidance in a six-month pilot for forty-two teammates or potential candidates hired was $37,440 (see fig. 2).
  - The future cost avoidance for one hundred applications annually is estimated to be $86,000 (see fig. 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual Pilot Cost Details</th>
<th># TMs</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Average Dollars/hr</th>
<th>Total $</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Packet Time</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>$4,800</td>
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<td>External FSS Actual &quot;Jane&quot; Assessment Time Spent</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>$80.00</td>
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<td>Internal FSS Actual &quot;Jane&quot; Assessment Time Spent</td>
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<td>$80.00</td>
<td>$2,880</td>
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<td>Cost of &quot;Jane&quot;</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>$80.00</td>
<td>$3,360</td>
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</table>

Figure 1. Actual pilot cost details.

Results, cont.

- 16 teammates who completed electronic assessments included subjective data via survey. Of the completed surveys, 100% agreed it was a positive experience with ease of use.
- 81% felt it was a good assessment of their clinical skill and preferred the electronic knowledge assessment vs. paper.
- The vendor supported our pilot at no cost to the organization. Pilot was from October 2022 to May 2023 (see fig.1). Future assigned assessments will have additional cost (see fig.2).
- Site leadership completed post assignment evaluations of the teammate. This included a question around skill/job performance. All teammates who completed our electronic assessments met expectations or higher in that category.

Figure 3. Number of FSS nurses by specialty.

Conclusions

- Utilizing an electronic tool provides cost savings from the manual paper process.
- Use of these assessments can be expanded to other Advocate Health areas of practice to reduce orientation for experienced teammates.
- Use for external pre-hire candidates yields the most cost avoidance since there is no hourly wage paid to take the assessments.
- Electronic assessment system requires a trained administrator to apply, monitor, interpret, and remediate results.
- There has been two unsuccessful candidates who did not score at or above national benchmark. If remediation is completed it requires additional workflows.

Implications for Practice

- This electronic tool provides a consistent approach to clinical competency assessment to proactively decrease turnover related to lack of clinical knowledge and will help retain teammates.
- Next steps, continue to partner with the vendor and encourage adding additional specialty options in the program.

References


Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge all the FSS teammates who have been so willing, patient, and flexible to make this program successful.