

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

UMMC RESIDENCY HELPS FIRST-YEAR NURSES MANAGE FRONTLINE TRIALS BY FIRE

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JACKSON, Miss. – The University of Mississippi Medical Center's hospitals are the first in the state to offer new nurses a one-year residency program to help nursing graduates adjust to the stressful daily grind of frontline health care.

The Nurse Residency Program is a concept established by the University HealthSystem Consortium and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. Originally developed in 2002, the program has spread to more than 60 hospitals across the nation.

UMMC nurse educators Joanne Coleman and Eloise Lopez implemented the program at the Medical Center last year. Coleman said they are seeking to gain national accreditation for the program. The programs have a marked effect on helping new nurses stick with their career choice.

A recent report by the Institute of Medicine, "The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health," cited residency programs as one of its major recommendations for nurse graduates.

"I looked at it because I kept reading the literature, and the outcomes are fabulous," said Coleman, hospital education coordinator. "They started out with about an 86-percent retention rate that first year. We're now up to 96 percent retention nationwide."

When Maggie Medders, a nursing resident, began her first job last year, like any new nurse, she said she was simply overwhelmed. The 2010 University of Mississippi School of Nursing graduate had an outlet to share her fears and vent her frustrations, both with peers who were experiencing the same difficulties of being new to the workforce and with seasoned nurses offering support and encouragement.

"The other nurses that are in your group, they're experiencing the same exact things that you're experiencing," she said. "It takes a lot of the stress and overwhelming aspects away so you can focus on learning to be a new nurse."

The residency is now required of all newly hired nurse graduates as well as those with less than six months of experience. Because of the research-based curriculum, residents must develop research projects during the course of the year, which they present before graduation.

A central component of the residency are monthly seminars featuring speakers on professional development topics and the "Tales From the Bedside" group discussions, in which residents have the chance to share concerns or questions with an experienced nurse serving as the facilitator.

Carol Baker, a nurse newly hired to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, said at first she dreaded coming to the meetings but soon found them to be a great stress-relief valve. "Our professors prepared us tremendously book-wise," she said. "But when you have an infant in front of you, and you're on your own for the first time, nothing prepares you."

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06/23/11

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The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state's only academic medical center. University of Mississippi Health Care represents the clinical programs of the Medical Center and includes University Hospitals and Health System and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. UMMC encompasses five health science schools, including medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy students do their clinical training. The Medical Center's threefold mission is to educate tomorrow's health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state's citizens. A major goal of the Medical Center is the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at 601-984-1100 or visit us on the Web at <http://www.umc.edu/>