

Recruiting and retaining blood and marrow transplantation (BMT) nurses remains challenging. In accordance with the Institute of Medicine recommendation to establish programs to prepare nurses for transition to specialty practice areas, a BMT fellowship program was designed and implemented at a large academic medical center. The yearlong fellowship program consists of monthly class sessions, observation experiences, case study presentations, and evidence-based project development. Outcomes related to retention, certification, and scholarship are presented.

#### AT A GLANCE

- The BMT RN fellowship addresses a gap in training nurses from diverse levels of clinical experience in a specialty area.
- The fellowship supports retention of participants and certification.
- With leadership support, staff nurses are empowered to develop evidence-based and nursing research projects.

#### KEYWORDS

blood and marrow transplantation; nurse fellowship; stem cell transplantation

#### DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

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# Blood and Marrow Transplantation RN Fellowship

Design, outcomes, and facilitating transition to practice

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**R**ecruitment and retention of qualified blood and marrow transplantation (BMT) RNs still has its challenges. To fully understand the complexity and infrastructure of BMT, the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP) has begun to address these many challenges by convening a diverse group of stakeholders to address opportunities and future growth of BMT programs (Majhail et al., 2012).

Roughly 20,000 BMTs are performed annually across 199 transplantation centers in the United States (D'Souza & Zhu, 2016). The Institute of Medicine ([IOM], 2011) highlighted the projected nursing shortage, which propelled the BMT nursing community to actively plan for cultivating a workforce to care for the growing population of transplantation recipients. The NMDP Nursing Workforce Working Group promotes increased awareness of BMT as a career option for students (Majhail et al., 2012). However, specialty training can be limited by the scope and size of BMT programs across the country, requiring unique approaches to the training of nurses in this field.

The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) describes nursing fellowships as planned comprehensive programs designed to assist in the transition of experienced nurses into a new specialty by providing them with knowledge, skills,

and professional behaviors to meet standards of practice of the specialty (ANCC, 2016). At the completion of orientation, many nurses new to a specialty need continued guidance and support. According to Benner (1984), any nurse entering a clinical setting in which he or she has no experience is considered a novice. To achieve success in the transition to a new specialty, knowledge, skills, and expectations have to be developed (Benner, 1984).

At Hackensack Meridian Health Hackensack University Medical Center in Hackensack, New Jersey, at which 400 transplantations are performed annually, an opportunity was identified to develop a specialty BMT nursing fellowship with the aims of increasing RN retention and BMT certification and encouraging staff to develop evidence-based projects and nursing research specific to this population.

#### Designing the Fellowship

The BMT nurse manager recognized the importance of a structured transition program for nurses with limited or no experience in BMT. Together, the nurse manager, clinical nurse specialist, and education specialist developed objectives and program content consistent with evidence-based practice. Goals of the BMT RN fellowship are as follows:

- Enable participants to provide comprehensive and evidence-based care