

Cultivating a Culture of Gratitude and Recognition Among Nurses and Staff on a Blood and Marrow Transplantation Unit

Bryce Catarelli, DNP, APRN, FNP-C, Jamie Dees, MSN, RN, CNL®, BMTCN®, and Fan Yi, PhD

OBJECTIVES: To measure baseline work gratitude among nurses and staff on a blood and marrow transplantation unit; to evaluate the impact of a positive workplace recognition intervention on work gratitude, sense of belonging and community, and job satisfaction; and to explore the relationships among these variables and job satisfaction.

SAMPLE & SETTING: In total, 40 survey responses (preintervention = 24, postintervention = 16) were collected from nurses and staff on a blood and marrow transplantation unit at a large academic hospital.

METHODS & VARIABLES: A pre- and postintervention survey included a demographic questionnaire and the Work Gratitude Scale. Public-facing digital signage was installed and used to project positive recognition, including expressions of gratitude from patients and staff.

RESULTS: Those with higher job satisfaction and a stronger sense of belonging and community reported higher work gratitude scores. There were no significant changes in job satisfaction, sense of belonging and community, and work gratitude scores.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING: Creating a positive work environment through gratitude and positive recognition could increase job satisfaction and sense of belonging and community among nurses and staff.

KEYWORDS gratitude; belonging; job satisfaction; positive recognition; work environment

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During a time of increasing nursing burnout, innovative strategies are being sought by nursing leadership to improve the work environment. Cultivating a positive work environment, focused on meaningful recognition and gratitude, may be one strategy to address this issue.

Background

Gratitude can motivate individuals to make positive changes in their lives to strengthen the network of support, become healthier and more productive at work, practice humility, and increase levels of generosity by learning to “pay it forward” when shown kindness and appreciation (Dulko & Kohal, 2022). When applied in the workplace, it can promote well-being and prosocial behavior (Youssef-Morgan et al., 2022). Gratitude can energize, heal, and bring hope—characteristics that are invaluable to a worn-out workforce emerging from a pandemic (Fishman, 2020). This is an important concept to explore to help address the heightened nursing turnover rate of about 18% in 2023, in addition to the overall hospital turnover rate of about 21% (NSI Nursing Solutions, 2024).

Meaningful recognition, including showing gratitude, is one of the six evidence-based standards to create a healthy work environment for nurses according to the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (n.d.). Research shows that expressions of gratitude toward healthcare staff from patients, families, and fellow healthcare providers have demonstrated improved job satisfaction and increased resiliency (Aparicio et al., 2019; Dulko & Kohal, 2022). This expression of gratitude can have personal and professional effects on healthcare professionals that extend beyond the care of individual patients. It increases motivation to continue caring for others,