Course Learning Outcomes for Unit IV

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Explain the educational preparation, credentials, licensing, and professional roles of the major health care professions.
2. Describe the key factors impacting supply and demand of health care professionals in America.
3. Discuss the key workforce issues facing American health care organizations at this point in history.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 6:
Health Care Personnel

Unit Lesson

Licensure, Certification, and Registration of Medical Professionals

In your reading assignment for this unit, you are learning about licensure, certification, and registration of health care professionals. The general public seems to use these terms interchangeably, but as you will see, each term has a very specific meaning and purpose in health care.

In Kansas, the State of Kansas Health Occupations Licensing Board decides which professions do and do not obtain licensure for their fields in that state. Actually, the Health Occupations Licensing Board makes a recommendation to the legislature, which ultimately does or does not pass a licensure bill. As a practical matter, the legislature typically listens to the Licensing Board.

Licensure

Licensure is an act of government that limits entry to practice in a particular field and limits the use of certain professional titles. Licensure is intended to protect the public from unqualified and unethical practitioners. Because of the cost involved, states are slow to give any profession licensure status unless it can make a very good case for why this is necessary and appropriate.

When there is a valid reason for licensure, it serves a very important role in our society. We would all agree that physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists, paramedics, pharmacists, and others who are involved in life-saving procedures and processes should be licensed. Additionally, whenever there is significant risk associated with a particular professional role, licensure is a good option to protect the public safety. For example, dentistry, practiced badly, can cause serious problems for the patient. There is risk, and there should be licensure.

When states decide to license a profession, they create a Licensing Board or Licensing Committee to oversee the field. The Licensing Board will be comprised primarily of experienced practitioners in the occupation. Any health care Licensing Board will also have representation from the general public, the “customers” of the profession. The Licensing Board will also have at least one physician representative to make the connection between that profession and the state Medical Board, which governs all medical practice in the state and has ultimate authority over the professional boards that report to it.

When licensing is enacted, a “Practice Act” is created and approved by the state legislature, and the process of licensing qualified practitioners begins. Generally there is a written exam for entry to the profession and sometimes a practical exam as well. There is always a licensing fee to each practitioner. Typically the fee will be in the range of $100 to $300 annually, depending upon the profession. These fees are intended to fund the
administration of licensing process in the state. Also, with licensure comes mandatory continuing education. Licensed professionals must demonstrate their willingness and ability to keep up with changes in the profession by completing a specified number of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) in the field. These are typically courses approved by the national organization of the profession. While the number of required CEUs varies, somewhere in the range of 12-20 CEU contact hours per license renewal is typical.

Certification

What about all the health care professions that patients encounter on a day-to-day basis but do not reach the professional status requiring licensure? Should there not be some regulation of those fields also? That is where certification comes in. Typically certification is done by a National Board for the profession, although there are some state level certification boards in operation. There is generally a certification exam to be passed and a credential earned. It is important to note that uncertified personnel practicing in a field are not breaking any law. If the state does not require licensure of a profession, then certification in that profession becomes a voluntary process. For example, some states have found it appropriate to license Massage Therapists, requiring passage of written and practical exams, payment of fees, and issuing of the credential Licensed Massage Therapist (LMT). Other states have no such law in place, and anyone can set about giving massages and charging for them. That leads to some pretty questionable practices, as you might imagine. So in states without licensure, true professional massage therapists still have the option of becoming certified and demonstrating to the public that they are qualified in the field.

Registration

Registration is the least restrictive form of medical credentialing. In registration, the particular state or national organization simply asks members of the profession to register with them, indicating that they are practicing in the field. This at least provides a method of contacting members of the profession and having some oversight if problems occur. But registration is totally voluntary.

While the credentialing of personnel is vital to the continuing operation of a health care facility, so is the recruitment and retention of personnel. The cost of replacing an employee can be as much as three times his or her annual salary. It only makes sense to keep employees for the long term.

Suggested Reading

Click here to access a PDF of the Chapter 6 Presentation.

Click here to access The Medical Assistant Profession presentation.

The link for The Medical Assistant Profession presentation is: http://media.pearsoncmg.com/pcp/pls/course_connect/ma/intro_to_ma/lesson_01/default.htm

Click here to access The Training, Education, and Credentialing for the Medical Assistant presentation.

The link for The Training, Education, and Credentialing for the Medical Assistant presentation is: http://media.pearsoncmg.com/pcp/pls/course_connect/ma/intro_to_ma/lesson_02/default.htm
Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

Career Development Plan

In this paper, you briefly explain your current career and identify your perspective position. Do research about role, duty, and requirement for the position. List the required education and practice for the position. Under each requirement, explain in detail about your plan to reach your career goals.

You do not need to submit the paper. However, you should put some effort to do research and write this paper. If you follow your plan, this paper will guide you to reach your career goals.

Non-Graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions contact your instructor for further guidance and information.

Key Terms

1. Alternative therapist
2. Behavioral scientist
3. Certification
4. Clinical nurse specialist
5. Doctor of Chiropractic (DC)
6. Doctor of Osteopathy (DO)
7. Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD)
8. Doctor of Podiatric Medicine (DPM)
9. Health information administrator
10. Licensure
11. Multiskilled health practitioner
12. Nurse practitioner
13. Occupational therapy
14. Physical therapy
15. Radiological technology
16. Registration
17. Rehabilitation Counselor
18. Respiratory therapy
19. Speech-language pathology
20. Support services
21. Therapeutic science practitioner