

**COMPARISON OF OUTCOMES OF COMMUNITY-BASED VERSUS
TRADITIONAL BASIC BACCALAUREATE PROGRAMS: REPORT OF
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF PILOT STUDY.**

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Background: It has now been almost a decade since the evolution of community based nursing education (CBNE) programs. When CBNE was first developed, the PEW commission (1991) had widely published predictions that there would be an oversupply of registered nurses in acute care settings by the year 2015 and therefore suggested that nursing education programs needed to shift their preparation focus to be more community based because that is where the majority of graduates would be working. That original prediction is no longer correct as nursing is in the midst of the worst nursing shortage in over forty years. An overwhelming majority of all new graduates from all levels of educational programs elect to practice in hospitals in the acute care arena for at least one year after graduation (del Bueno, 2002).

Purpose: While there has been much published about the benefits of CBNE and the need for change toward CBNE, much less work has been done in the area of the assessment of measurable outcomes that would demonstrate the effectiveness of CBNE. There are no studies that report the effectiveness of CBNE when the graduate enters the highly technical, high acuity reality of hospital nursing in the face of this severe shortage.

Method: This pilot study is funded by the National League for Nursing (NLN) and has compared the graduates of CBNE nursing curricula with those from a more traditional BSN program that has a separate course in community health at the end of the program on a number of standardized measures of educational outcomes. Six measures were used including three multiple choice exams one testing minimal knowledge base necessary for licensure (HESI Exit exam), another measuring the student's overall mastery of content related to the application of community health principles in various settings (Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI) exam), and a third testing issues of decision-making and management skills in the areas of safety, planning, supervision, counseling, delegation, collaboration, and identification of client and staff needs (also ATI). Students were also asked to complete three surveys: one related to how well prepared the student feels he/she was in terms of the AACN essential Baccalaureate behaviors (Educational Benchmarking Incorporated Exit Survey), another measuring self-efficacy in terms of clinical skill called the Clinical Skills Self-Efficacy Measure (CSSE, Owen, Froman, & Hand, 2003) and finally a survey measuring the 17 attitudes described by the Pew Commission as being essential to nursing called the Attitudinal Survey of Beliefs Related to Professional Nursing Competencies or the BRPNC (Simoni, 1996).

Discussion: Preliminary findings of the pilot study will be discussed and feedback will be sought for study revision as this pilot study is the planning basis for a national, multi-site, multi-method project to be conducted at the conclusion of the pilot study. Partners for participation in the future study will be solicited.