The Value of Recognition
The DAISY Award

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With increasing demands and diminishing nurse resources in the health care landscape today, it is even more important for health care leaders to understand the value that meaningful recognition brings to their organizations. Meaningful recognition is an integral component of a healthy work environment, supporting nurse satisfaction and the patient experience. The DAISY Award as a form of meaningful recognition for the past 21 years is an evidence-based practice used in more than 4600 health care organizations worldwide. This article discusses the evidence and provides a case study for the application of The DAISY Award as a value-added strategic tool for health care leaders and their organizations. Key words: gratitude, healthy work environment, meaningful recognition, nurse satisfaction, patient satisfaction, recognition

THE VALUE OF RECOGNITION: THE DAISY AWARD

Meaningful recognition is a powerful form of recognition and is considered an important component of a healthy work environment.1,2 The DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses (DAISY) is a form of meaningful recognition and celebrates nurses by recognizing their compassionate and skilled care in a meaningful way. This article will examine meaningful recognition in the form of The DAISY Award, the need for this recognition in the current health care landscape, and the value of it as an integral, evidence-based component of a healthy work environment. The application of

The DAISY Award in health care settings will be discussed and a case study will be shared to demonstrate its use as an important evidence-based tool for health care organizations.

RECOGNITION VERSUS MEANINGFUL RECOGNITION

There are few who would argue that receiving recognition for a job well done is valued at a personal level. Organizationally, recognition is identified as an important tool for leaders to engage staff in their work, improving staff satisfaction, performance, and organizational outcomes. Recognition, unlike compensation and traditional incentive-based programs, provides intrinsic value to an individual, setting up a cycle of increasing engagement and reinforcement of desired behaviors and associated outcomes, with minimal investment by the organization.3

Meaningful recognition is a powerful form of recognition and an important component of a healthy work environment.1 Meaningful recognition involves, “... acknowledging one’s behaviors and the impact these actions had on others, ensuring the feedback is relevant to the recognized situation, and is equal to the person’s contribution.”2(p351) Recognition provides positive feedback to the
individual receiving the recognition and momentarily reinforces the identified positive behaviors. The difference between meaningful recognition and other forms of positive feedback is the longevity of the effect, as meaningful recognition can resonate throughout a person’s life. The DAISY Award is a form of meaningful recognition and has become a standard for nurse recognition worldwide, demonstrating the value of meaningful recognition to those honored with the award, to their organizations, and to the patients and families receiving care.

THE DAISY AWARD

The DAISY Award honors nurses for their extraordinary compassionate care in a variety of nursing specialties and practice settings. DAISY is currently honoring nurses in more than 4,600 health care organizations in 29 countries worldwide. In 1999, The DAISY Foundation was established by the Barnes family in memory of the outstanding nursing care their son, Patrick, received. Patrick was 33 years of age when he died unexpectedly after 8 weeks of hospitalization, due to complications from his diagnosis of idiopathic thrombocytopenia purpura. He and his wife, Tena, had just become parents and were looking forward to the future and their life together with their new baby girl. Amid this family’s grief, a profound need to express their gratitude evolved into a structured program of meaningful recognition. The name “DAISY” is an acronym for Diseases Attacking the Immune SYstems, serving as a reminder of Patrick and the reason this recognition came to be. Today, more than 1.9 million nurses have been nominated for a DAISY Award and more than 156,000 nurses have received the award. Why is DAISY valued as a form of meaningful recognition in the nursing community? The current state of the health care landscape provides the backdrop to highlight the value DAISY brings to nurses and their health care organizations as it shines a light on the important role nurses play in care delivery.

THE NURSING WORKFORCE

The need for nurses to provide quality health care continues to rise. An estimated 200,000 registered nurses are needed annually, given that the employment of registered nurses in the United States is projected to grow 7% from 2019 to 2029, faster than the average for all occupations. Although nurses account for more than half of the world’s health workers, approximately 28 million nurses worldwide, there will be a global shortfall of 5.9 million nurses according to the World Health Organization’s 2020 report on the state of nursing in the world. This demand will be the result of an increased emphasis on preventive care; increasing rates of chronic conditions; and the exit of the baby boom population from the workforce with a reciprocal increased demand for health care services, as this group is projected to have a more active and longer life span than previous generations. These data do not reflect the impact of the pandemic, which has further highlighted the need. With an increase in demand for nursing services worldwide, health care organizations must strategically manage their nursing resources to meet future demand.

Retaining a high-performing cache of nurses is challenging at best and with the advent of the pandemic, the need is further exacerbated in terms of numbers and types of nurse specialties needed. When a nurse leaves an organization, costs to replace him or her add up in recruitment, orientation of his or her replacement, and the indirect cost of the loss of organizational knowledge that leaves with that nurse. High turnover of nurses depletes knowledge resources and diverts efforts to transferring knowledge capital to new staff rather than creating and applying new knowledge to patient care. This deficit in knowledge application can negatively impact the patient experience and outcomes, adding to the costs of nurse turnover. The average cost of turnover for a bedside registered nurse is estimated at $44,400, with ranges from $33,300 to $56,000 or more for specialty care.
losses add up, with the average hospital losing $3.6 million to $6.1 million annually. A percentage of change in nurse turnover can cost/save the average hospital an additional $306,400 per year.

Perhaps more important to consider in nurse turnover is the indirect cost to job satisfaction, nurse engagement in their work, and ultimately the impact to patient outcomes. Supporting and retaining an engaged nursing workforce contribute to positive organizational outcomes. The environment in which the nurse practices has proven to be key. In a study led by Dr Linda Aiken, the effects of nurse staffing and nurse education on mortality rates of surgical patients cared for in hospitals with different nurse work environments were examined. The study concluded that, “Better staffing, the most expensive option to improve care, has little effect on surgical mortality and failure-to-rescue in hospitals with poor work environments, but in hospitals with better work environments, staffing has a sizable effect.” In another study led by Dr Aiken, the work environments of health care organizations in 9 countries were examined. It was found that improving nurse work environments may be associated with “… substantial gains in stabilizing the global nurse workforce while also improving the quality of hospital care throughout the world.” A quality work environment for nurses continues to be substantiated in the literature to impact nurse job satisfaction, and patient outcomes, to include patient satisfaction.

THE PATIENT AND FAMILY EXPERIENCE

Attention to the customer experience to ensure customer loyalty is a concept that has been used outside of health care for many years. All businesses, to now include health care, strive to understand what is valued by their customers. Health care organizations are incentivized to provide a positive patient and family experience as a quality metric and linked to hospital reimbursement by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Compassionate caring nursing behavior for patients and their families fosters a bond that manifests in a profound sense of gratitude by the patient/family and communicated in the form of a DAISY Award nomination. The means to acknowledge gratitude contributes to a positive patient experience. A sentiment analysis of 971 DAISY Award nominations revealed the importance of compassionate nursing practice to patients and their families. In fact, the compassionate delivery of nursing care was noted to be of more importance than the care itself. Research has demonstrated that patients who have the means to express their gratitude for care through The DAISY Award reflected positive perceptions of their hospital experience. Through DAISY Award nominations, organizations capture the patient and family voice in what they value in care delivery. This form of qualitative data provides value to organizations that use it not only to celebrate great nursing care but also to improve care delivery. When shared with nurses, these positive, desired behaviors embedded in DAISY nominations are reinforced and provide opportunities to continually improve care delivery and the work environment.

The literature indicates that organizations that recognize compassionate acts by caregivers and compassionately support caregivers in times of traumatic experiences at work create an environment for those caregivers to be more sensitive to the needs of their patients and respond appropriately to their suffering, which in turn provides greater satisfaction in their work. Positive work environments are key to nurse satisfaction and the patient and family experience, which ultimately supports nurse engagement and the intent to stay at an organization. The DAISY Award, as a form of meaningful recognition, can have a significant role in establishing and sustaining a positive work environment for organizations, supporting nurses and the patients and the families they care for (see Figure 1).
HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT

The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) has established standards for addressing the work environment of nurses. Originally, the AACN intended to identify the components of a work environment that engaged critical care nurses in their work to address impending shortages. However, their findings were found to be applicable to a variety of nurse practice settings, such as surgical, oncology, pediatrics, and many others. Skilled Communication, True Collaboration, Effective Decision Making, Appropriate Staffing, Authentic Leadership, and Meaningful Recognition were identified in the early research as the 6 components of a healthy work environment. This work resulted in the AACN Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments, which was first published in 2005, and again in 2016, and more recently validated in 2018. These standards are used as a road map for organizations that want to improve their work environments. It is of note that all 6 components within the standards must be in place for a work environment to be considered healthy. According to the AACN, the meaningful recognition standard instructs that, nurses must be recognized and must recognize others for the value each brings to the work of the organization. The DAISY Award provides for such recognition.

A relationship between the work environment, job satisfaction, and intent to leave has been identified. The 2018 Critical Care Nurse Work Environment Study surveyed a total of 8080 critical care registered nurses and found that those who considered themselves part of a healthy work environment were more satisfied and less likely to leave their organizations. In correlating AACN’s 6 components of a healthy work environment to job satisfaction, meaningful recognition was found to have a positive correlation. Participants who reported lower job satisfaction were more likely to report an intent to leave the organization. Given the current state and future needs of the nursing workforce and the role of the work environment, it is strategically wise to tap into the power and value of meaningful recognition with The DAISY Award.

MEANINGFUL RECOGNITION WITH THE DAISY AWARD

Meaningful recognition is an important, relatively easy, and inexpensive component to implement as a first step in establishing a healthy work environment. Recognizing and celebrating compassionate and expert
nursing care with The DAISY Award may counter the negative impacts of the work environment and enhance the positive, leading to greater nurse engagement and retention.\(^{11,16,23}\) Nursing as a caring profession includes both positive care giving experiences, such as the long-awaited birth of a child, and negative experiences, such as helping a family manage its grief when its loved one has died. Managing a balance between the positive and negative impacts is important as both are present in the work environment of nurses.

Compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue are manifestations of the nurses' work environment. Compassion satisfaction, the pleasure and gratitude that the nurse derives from his or her work, is enhanced when that good work is reflected back to him or her as meaningful recognition.\(^{24}\) Compassion fatigue is the sum of burnout and secondary traumatic stress.\(^{21}\) Burnout is manifested by the chronic exposure to psychological stressors, while secondary traumatic stress is the cumulative result of the nurse’s vicarious exposure to the trauma experiences of those he or she cares for.\(^{24}\) Compassion satisfaction counterbalances compassion fatigue. When the balance falls to compassion fatigue, manifestations include emotional distress, safety risks, apathy, loss of empathy, workdays lost, a desire to quit, and poor judgment.\(^{25,26}\) When compassion satisfaction is greater, individuals feel an increase in caring, a sense of contribution to the work, more energized moments to fuel creativity and innovation, and greater satisfaction with their work.\(^{25}\) Understanding the impact of The DAISY Award on compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue of nurses further underscores its value.

In an examination of the impact of meaningful recognition on compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue, The DAISY Award was used as a proxy for meaningful recognition. Critical care nurses in 24 hospitals nationwide were recruited to understand the impact in a measurable way in a study by Kelly and Lefton.\(^{27}\) In this study, the Professional Quality of Life instrument was used to measure compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue in this population of nurses. They found that not only did receiving The DAISY Award improve compassion satisfaction scores but receiving a nomination for The DAISY Award also demonstrated better scores than for those who had not received such recognition.\(^{27}\)

Meaningful recognition with The DAISY Award can mitigate the negative impacts to nurses and subsequent impacts to organizations. The value of workdays lost or the exit of a nurse from an organization can be calculated in dollars and cents. But the impact to safety due to poor judgment, loss of empathy, and the emotional distress for the nurse or the patient is more difficult to calculate. The strategic use of The DAISY Award as a form of meaningful recognition supports a culture of recognition, contributing to a healthy work environment that engages the nursing workforce, leading to a better patient experience and an organization’s financial viability. Meaningful recognition is an important first step in an organization’s journey to excellence.

CULTURE OF RECOGNITION: A CASE STUDY

Creating a culture of nursing excellence with validation through Magnet designation was the goal that West Kendall Baptist Hospital, a 133-bed, nonprofit community hospital, located in Miami-Dade County, Florida, set for itself. The hospital faced multiple challenges in this process, including leadership changes. Organizational change, especially in leadership, creates uncertainty for staff. This contributes to low morale, poor job satisfaction, and a lack of staff engagement in their work. Sandra McLean, the vice president and chief nursing officer of the organization, shared: “Anytime there is a change in leadership the challenge becomes ensuring morale is high and that employees remain engaged. With that focus, the organization needed to ensure it was looking at solutions that would foster employee engagement and inclusion to ensure both nurse and patient satisfaction.”\(^{28}(p2)\)
Leadership felt that their biggest challenge was how to get nurses and patients to recognize the extraordinary high-quality care they were providing in a consistent and meaningful way. Positive and satisfying interaction with patients and families is something nurses find highly attractive about their career. Expression of gratitude from patients and their families, regardless of outcome, validates the importance of their work and supports a sense of contribution, improving morale and satisfaction. A highly satisfied, engaged workforce is also a signature element of hospitals designated as Magnet.\textsuperscript{17}

Capturing the evidence was an important documentation for their Magnet journey. The DAISY Award program provided the means to capture the evidence of compassionate and extraordinary nursing care through the stories embedded in the nominations of nurses for the award.\textsuperscript{4} The leadership team determined that The DAISY Foundation’s meaningful recognition program would be the best fit to achieve their goal to honor their nurses. Through the program, the organization could also meet its goals of improving engagement and satisfaction, integral to achieving Magnet designation. According to Ms. McLean, “The best thing about The DAISY Award is that it goes beyond peer recognition by engaging the patients and their families from our community in the nomination process. It allows our nurses to hear that they are truly making a difference with their compassionate care.”\textsuperscript{28(p2)} West Kendall Baptist Hospital ensures that every nurse who receives a nomination is publicly recognized.

This nurse recognition program helped satisfaction reach an all-time high, while concurrently creating a significant shift in culture and was embraced by the nursing workforce. “Our nurse recognition program allows every nurse at West Kendall Baptist Hospital to feel they can be recognized for their compassion and ability to help patients and their families. This has helped create a more satisfied workforce where nurses are taking the time to personally connect with each patient, which I believe is resulting in overall better care. The program has allowed us to create a level of engagement that has led to even more compassion for patients and families. Our nurses are more satisfied, which is a good thing for everyone,” said Ms McLean.\textsuperscript{28(p3)}

The results of their DAISY Award program demonstrated the impact. Patient satisfaction scores on the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) ratings provided them with a 4-star quality rating. For the indicators: communicates well, patient rating, and patients who would recommend the hospital, scores exceeded state and national benchmarks. In terms of participation in The DAISY Award program over a 2-year period, meaningful recognition nominations increased by 131%. Ms McLean shared in summary to this experience:

The difference that hospitals provide to those that are ill is 24/7 care. That care is provided predominantly by nurses. At West Kendall Baptist Hospital, 40% of our workforce is nurses so the experience of our patients rests on their shoulders.

Our nurse recognition program has taken nursing to the next level of engagement and satisfaction, not only for our nurses but for our patients and their families. The pride that comes from a nurse being honored by a patient for compassionate care sets a high standard for our hospital. I think that our nurses provide the best care that is possible to our community. That makes me feel very good.\textsuperscript{28(p4)}

As a result of West Kendall Baptist Hospital’s investment to improve the patient experience and nurse satisfaction along with an outreach to the community they support, the hospital realized their goal of a culture of excellence and was recognized as one of the top 6% of hospitals in the world achieving Magnet designation.\textsuperscript{29} This cultural transformation is another example of the value that The DAISY Award can bring to an organization. The DAISY Award’s impact is recognized in the clinical settings of the nursing workforce. Another critical consideration for leveraging DAISY’s value is on the supply side of
The Value of Recognition

the nursing workforce in our academic centers where nurses are educated.

MEANINGFUL RECOGNITION IN THE ACADEMIC SETTING

If not for nursing faculty to educate and inspire the next generation of nurses, where would the profession of nursing be? Extraordinarily skilled and compassionate nursing faculty are vital to the nursing workforce supply chain as vital role models for future nurses. The benefits of The DAISY Award can be applied in this setting.

The demand continues to increase for nurses who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to serve as faculty in schools of nursing. Although the reported vacancy rate for nursing faculty nationally dropped from 7.2% in 2019 to 6.5% in 2020, the concern to have enough qualified faculty to meet the increasing worldwide demand for nurses remains. It is expected that one-third of the current nursing faculty workforce in baccalaureate and graduate programs will retire by 2025. Given the recommendations in the State of the World’s Nursing 2020 report, which asked governments to invest in nursing education, create 6 million nursing positions, and strengthen the presence of nursing leadership in higher levels of governance, it is evident that the need for more nursing faculty is real and the retention of nursing faculty is key. Academic organizations rely on clinical placements in health care organizations and a pool of experienced faculty to facilitate the education of students in the clinical setting. Clinical nursing faculty are intrinsically motivated to teach and a significant relationship between their job satisfaction and intent to stay has been identified in the literature.

Bringing greater awareness to faculty of the difference they make may bring them greater satisfaction and energize them in their work. The concept of the healthy work environment and meaningful recognition as a component is translatable to the academic setting as are the benefits.

In 2018, The DAISY Foundation in partnership with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing issued a call to action to increase the recognition of faculty as models for compassionate extraordinary care with The DAISY Award. In July 2020, the National League for Nursing and the Organization of Associate Degree Nurses joined in a renewed call to action with a greater sense of urgency and appreciation for the pivot that faculty made to deliver education during a global pandemic. Currently, in more than 350 schools of nursing, DAISY provides a means to capture important feedback regarding faculty, such

Figure 2. Gratitude to nurses. Reprinted with permission from The DAISY Foundation.
as, “she nurtures students’ interest, instills confidence, and simultaneously maintains a high standard in her teaching” or “whether at the lectern, the hospital, the courtroom, the legislative floor, church, or home, she shows love, compassion, and a kind listening ear with everyone.” One faculty recipient of The DAISY Award commented upon receiving the award that the recognition brought her 5 more years of teaching. Think of the impact of multiplying that outcome across all faculty in schools of nursing and its value to the supply side of our nursing workforce!

CONCLUSION

The value of meaningful recognition through The DAISY Award has been repeatedly demonstrated since its creation in 1999. DAISY’s value translates across practice settings and geographic boundaries to bring meaning to the experiences of patients, families, students, and the nurses who care for them and who teach them as educators. Meaningful recognition through DAISY is evidence based and operationalized through DAISY’s programs (see Figure 2). DAISY’s value was never intended to be calculated in terms of dollars and cents but rather as an expression of gratitude to nurses for the extraordinary compassionate care that they deliver each day. It is a bonus that organizations can realize the direct, financial value of gratitude and meaningful recognition while embracing the intrinsic value as they celebrate and elevate the importance of compassionate nursing care. Recognition with The DAISY Award is an investment whose value is realized in the positive outcomes of organizations celebrating their nurses and the care they provide!

REFERENCES


