Developing an Alternative Nursing Staffing Model for Longterm Patients in the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit (CICU)
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Background
- The primary nursing model or relationship-based care model is an approach to nursing care which is based on the philosophy that the development of a nurse-patient-family relationship is vital to continuity of care.
- This model is widely used in Magnet-designated hospitals and linked to positive patient outcomes and staff satisfaction.
- Although this form of nursing care delivery has been shown to empower nurses and promote autonomy it does not always provide for the complex issues and stressors that may arise during prolonged hospitalizations.
- This quality improvement initiative aimed to develop a nursing staffing model that would maintain continuity of care for longterm patients while enabling nurses to have other clinical opportunities and advance their practice.

Methods
- An alternative scheduling approach was designed by dividing the established primary nursing care team into A and B teams.
- Each team consisted of an equal number of nurses and was divided according to rotations and permanent shifts.
- Team A was assigned to care for a longterm patient for a 2 week interval while Team B members would care for a variety of other patients.
- This enabled Team B members to seek out other clinical opportunities and maintain their skill set.
- This staffing model was implemented on a longterm patient from November 2011 to March 2012.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of this alternative nursing staffing model, a survey was sent out to all members of the primary care team.
- The findings indicated that the majority of team members appreciated the rotation to be involved in this patient’s care while having other clinical opportunities.
- Suggestions to improve the practice included developing a larger team to maintain the schedule and more consistency when assigning teams.
- The scheduling guidelines have been altered based on these findings and we continue to assess the effectiveness of this staffing model with each longterm patient.

Conclusions
- The alternative nursing staffing model for longterm patients in the CICU provided patients and families with continuity of care while enabling nurses to seek out other clinical opportunities during team rotation.
- Efforts to improve the process included building larger teams and creating clear guidelines to improve consistency.