



MINORITY NURSE

Continuing Education and Training Gaining Greater Emphasis As Need for Case Managers Grows

by [Catherine Mullahy, RN, BS, CRRN, CCM](#) | Oct 18, 2016 | [Blog, Nursing Careers](#) | [0 Comments](#)

A study conducted by the Commission for Case Manager Certification (CCMC) cites increasing demand for certified case managers. The CCMC's *2014 Role and Function Study* also found that employers are willing to pay higher salaries for professionals whose education, training, and certification demonstrates a higher level of knowledge, skills, and overall competency. Further, the study revealed that 40.2% of employers are now requiring their case managers to be certified. Contrast this figure to the 25.9% of employers requiring certification in 2004. The CCMC's conclusion regarding a growing demand for well-trained and credentialed case managers is supported anecdotally by the actions of many health care organizations.



Clearly, case management presents a strong career path for nurses and even greater opportunities today. The opportunities can be even greater for minority nurses, including African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, Filipinos, and Native American and Alaskan nurses, for which there is already a concerted effort to recruit so that they can bring their cultural competencies to our nation's increasingly diverse patient population. However, continuing education and training are musts for any nurse who truly wants to make a difference in his or her patients' lives while also realizing his or her full professional potential and earning power. The education starts by understanding how the market is driving increasing demand for case managers and, the educational resources available to help them become key catalysts for the delivery of better health care in America.

Not Just a Personal Choice—Employers Demanding Higher Skills

While the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA) raised the bar on expected standards of care and paved the way for increased demand for case managers, market conditions were already driving the need up. The graying of America, coinciding with the increased incidence of chronically ill patients of various ages succumbing to diseases of the 20th and now 21st century (e.g., obesity, high blood pressure, and chronic pulmonary obstruction disease) all have placed greater

demands on health care providers. This, in turn, prompted many to increase their hiring of case managers—also being called care coordinators, patient advocates, and a host of other titles. For example, back in 2012, the UCLA Health system in Los Angeles began hiring full-time care coordinators to work with doctors serving in its primary care clinics. By 2015, UCLA had 24 “Comprehensive Care Coordinators” serving in its ambulatory primary care clinics.

Other health care organizations across the country, including hospitals, accountable care organizations, managed care firms, and insurers were and are actively increasing their case management staff. Some examples are: Advocate Health Care, Bon Secours Health System, Banner Health, Mercy Health Select, Partners Healthcare and the University of Michigan Health System. Based on the CCMC’s figures, by 2015 there were 37,000 certified case managers serving in U.S. health care organizations versus 20,000 in 2010. An estimated 89% of the certified case managers are registered nurses. The balance is comprised of social workers (4.4%), vocational rehabilitation counselors (2.3%), and others.

Despite the growing demand for case managers, the profession is not without its challenges. Of the over 100,000 professionals involved in case management, their average age is estimated by various surveys to be 53 years old. The transfer of knowledge from these experienced professionals to their younger counterparts is essential as demand rises and many of the field’s most skilled are entering the retirement years. Through continuing education, training, and mentoring of newer case managers by experienced case managers, some of the deficits in skills and knowledge can be addressed.

The federal government is acutely aware of the importance of training for RN case managers. In fact, the government has established a fund of \$20 million for training, specifically in the areas of data collection, reporting, and practice changes to help smaller health care practices improve. Many minority nurse case managers serve in smaller health care practices, in addition to large urban hospitals, so they may very well be beneficiaries of this federally-funded training. Employers too are hosting more educational and training programs for their case management staff and encouraging their personnel to participate in continuing education programs, not just for licensing compliance purposes, but for their own skill development and career advancement.

Based on current [PayScale data](#), Certified Case Managers with the title of Nurse Case Manager are averaging annual salaries of between \$60,514 to \$89,132, depending on the employer and region of the country. Directors of Case Management are commanding average annual salaries within the range of \$75,978 to \$145,177, and those with the title of Registered Nurse, Utilization Management, are averaging annual \$61,545 to \$98,197.

Most RN case managers can aspire to become leaders in their departments, assuming they have earned their CCM designation and are committed to being continuous learners. Knowing the options in continuing education case management training programs and resources available and how to select wisely is tantamount to building best practices in case management and assuming leadership roles.

Continuing Education and Training Resources

StateCE, a part of Vista College, reported that nearly 76 million adults in the U.S. are enrolled in some form of continuing education. Many human capital development experts believe that training

from outside continuing education providers offers a distinct advantage over in-house training programs. It is their contention that this education helps individuals gain a deeper level of knowledge—both theoretical and practical, as well as enhancing their problem-solving and collaboration skills. In addition to gaining higher-skilled employees, employers gain the added benefit of continuing education promoting staff retention. A study by Spherion Atlantic Enterprises reported that 61% of employees who receive continuing education remain with their current employers for at least five years.

Continuing education (CE) resources include independent organizations, colleges/universities, professional organizations, and internal training departments. Their offerings range from onsite CE-credit seminars and certification workshops, webinars, and various long distance e-learning programs. The best continuing education programs and resources for case management have certain traits in common. They are:

- Developed and provided by credentialed professionals with both clinical and business experience;
- Goal-oriented, whether the goals, for example, be: certification, gaining best practice skills, gaining knowledge about a specific medical condition and/or patient population, learning how to manage a case management department, or learning what it takes to start your own case management firm; and
- Have specific learning objectives clearly conveyed regardless of whether the program or educational resource involves an instructor or self-learning.

Along with meeting these criteria, there are other specifics which seem to be important in the effectiveness of a continuing education program. For instance, data uncovered in 19 studies and discussed in a *Nurse Education Today* article titled “Review of continuing professional education in case management for nurses” found that the “most appropriate program length appears to be at least 16 hours.” Further, the findings were that a combination of interactive lectures and small group discussions were associated with the most positive learning outcomes. What we know is that each type of continuing education program or resource has a valuable role to play.

Different Benefits of Different Educational Formats

Following are some examples of different continuing educational offerings, their various formats, and the benefits they deliver:

Onsite Seminars. These seminars are presented by qualified instructors with both clinical and business experience and are ideal for engaging case managers, giving them a direct line to an experienced professional whose insights into processes and nuances are without a doubt vital to professional growth and advancement. These events also give case managers an opportunity to share their experiences with and learn from their peers. On that level, they help to boost morale, build professional camaraderie, and instill a sense of professional pride.

CCM Certification Workshop. This workshop has a specific purpose in helping a case manager prepare for their certification exam. These workshops, especially those backed by the CCMC, deliver education and up-to-date information about best practices in today’s case management, while also

imparting need-to-know information regarding the eligibility requirements and application process for the gold-standard case management credential—the CCM[®]—and how to prepare for the exam.

Setting-Specific Educational Programs. Setting-specific programs, such as a Hospital Case Management Seminar, are customized for a specific hospital's needs and designed to help a hospital case management staff achieve improvement across key quality metrics, as well as overall health care efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Because the program is hospital-specific, it also has the residual benefit of instilling in each participant a renewed passion for their role and commitment to their organization.

Agency-Specific Educational Programs. These programs are for case managers serving with the Veterans Administration system or Indian Health Services organizations; both of which encounter very unique challenges both from a patient and administrative perspective and thus require continuing education that recognizes and helps case managers function at their best within the constraints of these settings.

Patient Population, Medical Condition, or Challenge-Specific Educational Programs. These programs, such as those tackling pediatric case management, obesity, our nation's multiculturalism, the aging population, or health literacy problems, delve deeply into a specific topic to give case managers a broader, more comprehensive understanding of a medical condition or challenge they are likely to be handling already.

Seminars on DVD. These offer the best of both worlds. Case managers can gain access to a great seminar, perhaps being conducted in a city too far from their location, by simply purchasing the seminar on DVD. This gives the case manager a virtual seminar experience right from the convenience of their own home or office. It also enables case management department supervisors to have a "refresher course" right at their fingertips for easy access to continuous learning, and to provide to new staff members. Many of the profession's best seminars on DVD come with handouts, video clips, and some even offer a phone consultation with the program instructor.

Seminar e-Workbooks. These are also ideal for case managers who can't attend a seminar but recognize the importance of their learning the information presented at the seminar. Often, these e-Workbooks are provided on convenient flash drives and include PowerPoint presentations, case studies, and other resource materials.

Textbooks and Related Home Study Programs. These are perhaps the perennial continuing education resource for case managers. Every case manager's personal library and every health care organization's training room should be equipped with the profession's best textbooks. Today, some of the most prolific authors, whose textbooks are used by nursing schools worldwide, also offer companion home study programs to their books and associated continuing education tests approved for CE credits. For instance, *The Case Manager's Handbook Home Study Program* offers a continuing education test, which has been approved for 80 CE Credits. It can be taken online to prepare for the CCM exam or to help case managers meet their CE credit requirements.

Learning Management Systems. These are another option for personal learning growth and career advancement. They are typically module-based to make for easy, convenient learning and are

organized in a sequence that promotes the best building of knowledge and acquisition of skills.

Closing Remarks

Continuing education should not be viewed by case managers as a necessary evil for maintaining their professional license, but rather as a valuable tool worthy of their investment. Continuing education is essential for building knowledge and skills, helping case managers become better patient advocates and better employees able to support their employer's quality of care, risk management, and fiscal objectives. Moreover, through continuing education accessed through a multitude of options, case managers can take control of their own careers and position themselves for optimum advancement opportunities, salary gains, and potential leadership roles. It is incumbent upon minority nurse case managers to recognize that the investment they make in their continuing education and continuous learning is a clear path to gain a greater voice in our nation's health care system. Through continuing education and the greater opportunities, it affords, they are in a better position to raise awareness of the value of high-quality case management, and in turn, make a greater difference in the lives of all patients across all communities.

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