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*Creating a Healthier Maryland*

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## FUTURE OF NURSING™ CAMPAIGN FOR ACTION

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### **New Curriculum to Advance Nurse Education in Addictions**

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### **Abstract**

#### *Background*

Substance use and substance-use disorders (SU/SUDs) are major health concerns that affect families and communities, and consume extensive financial and health care resources. Yet evidence indicates that those with SU/SUDs often receive inadequate or deficient care. Our current opioid epidemic has been further complicated by the pandemic with 2020 being the worst year ever for drug overdose deaths, with 81,000 as of May. Meanwhile, Maryland has disproportionately high opioid emergency visits and hospital admissions compared to the rest of the country and continues to rank among the highest in the nation for opioid deaths.

As SU/SUDs are so prevalent, nurses in all settings encounter many patients with SU/SUDs, along with comorbid care needs. Yet most nursing schools provide limited, often insufficient, addictions education, restricting nurses' ability to provide optimal care to those affected by SU/SUDs. We therefore set out to address these educational deficits with a nimble, largely online curriculum designed for nurses.

#### *Methods*

To establish the curricular essentials, students were surveyed at the University of Maryland School of Nursing (UMSON) in fall 2019 on their SU/SUDs education needs. UMSON faculty with experience working in addictions developed an evidence-based curriculum for undergraduate and graduate students with practical applications. An advisory board comprised of addictions clinicians and content experts contributed perspectives on workforce needs and gave curricular feedback. Courses underwent approval at UMSON, and the certificate program required approval at the UMSON, campus, system, and state levels.

#### *Results*

Addictions curriculum was developed to address unmet educational needs to respond to this critical health care problem. We created a Substance Use and Addictions focus area for RN-to-BSN students, with a three-course plan of study within existing program requirements. Courses

include motivational interviewing (MI), addictions foundations, and the required community health course, with a clinical placement targeted towards addictions.

For graduate nurses (with a bachelor's degree or higher), we developed the Substance Use and Addictions Nursing (SUAN) certificate program. The four-course certificate, launching fall 2021, includes graduate-level foundations, MI, special topics (e.g., lifespan, culture), and a practicum tailored to the student's interests in their locale. The first two courses also can serve as electives. The foundations course has been offered twice, and the graduate MI course debuted this spring with 14 students.

### *Conclusion*

Preparing nurses to effectively address the substantial and largely unmet addictions care needs is long overdue. This curriculum advances nurse education and facilitates professional growth with the practical knowledge and skills to enable nurses to provide addictions care for individuals, families, and communities affected by SU/SUDs.