The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI):

Open School Student Quality Leadership Academy

Kathy Ahern Gould RN, PhD

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) is in an independent not-for-profit organization based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Institute was formed in 1986 in response to the belief that everyone deserves safe and effective health care. It is currently an international organization, serving as a center for improvements in quality and safety in healthcare. Its mission remains focused on motivating and building the will for change; identifying and testing new models of care in partnership with both patients and health care professionals; and ensuring the broadest possible adoption of best practices and effective innovations.

The IHI inspires and trains our current and future health care workforce to be skilled agents of change—to improve care at home, in the community, in the office practice, and throughout the hospital: in the outpatient clinic, on the medical-surgical floor, in the intensive care unit, and in the emergency department (www.IHI.org).

Boston College nursing students are actively involved with the IHI through classroom discussion, exploring research, and engaging in evidenced based practice. One specific educational community within the IHI is the IHI OPEN School which offers on-line course work and other programs designed to introduce students to health care improvement. Students are encouraged to join the IHI OPEN School for Health Professions which provides educational offerings at no charge while they are still in school.

Three Boston College School of Nursing students, Ann Harrington, Brooke Hopkins, and Nicole Tuccinardi, were granted full scholarships to attend the Annual IHI OPEN School Student Quality Leadership Academy held July 19-20, 2012 in Cambridge, MA. The two-day program, sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, focused on building leadership competencies. Dr. Donald Berwick, former Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and former President and CEO of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, opened the program and was joined by expert faculty members from IHI and leaders from the health care community. Participants learned specific skills related to leading change, managing conflict, communicating effectively, and tackling other leadership challenges they currently face, or will face in their careers. Additional guest speakers Diana Chapman Walsh, President Emeritus of Wellesley College and IHI Board Member, and Julian Harris, Director of the Office of Medicaid for Massachussetts, directed interactive workshops allowing participants to explore their own leadership styles.

Sigma Theta Tau Alpha Chi members Anne Harrington(’13) and Nicole Tuccinardi, BSN RN (’12) share their experiences at the Leadership Academy with our membership.

Anne Harrington
Boston College School of Nursing, Class of 2013:

On July 18th and 19th, I had the opportunity to attend the Institute for Healthcare Improvement Student Leadership Conference. The list of attendees and their credentials was impressive and diverse; healthcare administrators, public health policy managers, medical engineers, pharmacy students, and even a veterinary student comprised this extremely motivated and skilled group.

As a student nurse entering my senior year, I must admit that initially I felt intimidated and out of place amongst some of the most innovative and well known nurses in healthcare quality improvement. This feeling was quickly remedied as the first day of the conference began and I got to know my fellow students and guest lecturers better. Despite varying professions and backgrounds, the group’s collective passion for quality improvement and exceptional patient outcomes made us a team of healthcare providers, rather than distinct groups of the medical field.

The two days of the conference were organized into a series of lectures, delivered by extraordinary leaders in health care including, Donald Berwick, MD, MPP, former administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and former president and CEO of IHI, Jo Ayoob, director of organizational development and staffing at Beth Israel deaconess medical center, Amy Wasserman program manager, leadership development Beth Israel deaconess medical center, Barry Don, a professor at the Harvard school of public health, Susan Block, oncolgy and palliative care specialist at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Vinod Saney, PhD, professor of health policy at Harvard, Diana Chapman Walsh, president emeritus Wellesley college, and IHI board member, Julian Harris, director of Medicaid in Massachusetts, Allan franked, Co-chief medical officer at Pascal Metrics inc, IHI faculty, and former director of patient safety at Partners Healthcare systen, Katherine Luther, RN, MPM, vice president HOSPITAL PORTFOLIO planning and administration at IHI, and Kathy Masters, MS, RD, director of healthcare improvement at Memorial Herman Texas Medical Center (TMC).

Each speaker had a different story to tell about their experience and commitment to healthcare improvement. I was most moved by the final presentation which was a case study aimed at improving specific outcomes, such as Ventilator Associated Pneumonia (VAP) and sepsis. Katherine Luther, RN, MPM, Vice President of Hospital Portfolio Planning and Administration at IHI, and Kathy Masters, MS, RD, Director of Healthcare Improvement at Memorial Herman TMC, presented a case study from the Medical Intensive Care Unit (MICU) that revealed the unit had many areas in need of improvement. As session leaders, they asked the students to approach the situation from the standpoint of the nurses in the MICU. We were to ask to consider the difficult task of tackling improvements and instituting changes that were needed, while maintaining morale and relationships within the unit.

After allowing the students to brainstorm and volunteer their suggestions, Luther and Masters revealed the actual strategies that were implemented to bring about change and achieve successful outcomes. It was exciting to hear about the process and learn why they worked. Their presentation was dynamic and interactive, and allowed me to understand not only the importance, but necessity, of involving every member of the healthcare team when attempting to make change.

As a student nurse preparing to graduate in 2013, I was encouraged and energized by the underlying message of all of the speakers at The IHI Leadership Conference. In the future of healthcare, no single health care provider is implementing change we envision. As the second day concluded, I left the Charles Hotel Conference Center with an overwhelming feeling of hope and ambition, which was in every respect due to my interactions with colleagues and speakers that I had encountered just 48 hours earlier! Continuous Quality improvement, constant evaluation of outcomes, and research to improve those outcomes, are all essentials of the healthcare system I will enter as a new RN.

As nurses and nursing students, we play an invaluable role in this process. I strongly encourage students to not only apply to attend this type of program, but to also envision themselves as the catalysts for changes they wish to make. I cannot thank the faculty at Boston College enough for encouraging me to attend this conference.

Nicole Tuccinardi, BSN RN
Boston College, 2012

“The IHI Open School for Health Professions is an inter-professional educational community that gives students the skills to become change agents in health care improvement...Skills like quality improvement, patient safety, teamwork, leadership and patient-centered care” (www.IHI.org).

I was informed of this program by my Adult Health I clinical instructor, Dr.Kathy Ahern Gould. We discussed the program at the Sigma Theta Tau Alpha Chi Chapter induction ceremony last spring. I was very interested so when an email was sent out to the nursing school, I responded right away; it seemed like an opportunity that I wouldn’t want to miss. There was an online application that included several questions that required short essays.

The application asked questions such as: “Why is patient safety important to you? Why do you want to...”
attend this seminar? What does being a leader mean to you? What do you hope to achieve from this academy? I applied in April and received an email by the end of May accepting me to the IHI Open School Student Quality Leadership Academy to take place in Cambridge, MA in July.

Before I attended, I expected the seminar to have a lot of role-play scenarios that the students would have to participate in. However, the seminar went above and beyond my expectations. The participants were emailed an itinerary a week in advance. We completed a live webinar one week prior to the program, with the former President and CEO of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and the former Administrator for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Donald M. Berwick, MD, MPP, FRCP. In addition, all students attending were recommended to take some of the free courses that the IHI website offers. These courses, currently offered to all students at no charge, were to help the students prepare and become familiar with the information they would encounter during the two-day seminar. The courses included “Introduction to Patient Safety”, “Fundamentals of Improvement”, “The Model for Improvement: Your Engine for Change”, and “So You Want to Be a Leader in Health Care”.

The first day of the Student Quality Leadership Academy had every minute scheduled with lectures and speakers from several healthcare workers such as: Dr. Donald Berwick, Susan D. Block (Chair of the Department of Psychosocial Oncology and Palliative Care at Dana Farber and Brigham and Women’s Hospital), Vinod K. Sahney (Senior Fellow at the IHI and Adjunct Professor of Health Policy and Management at Harvard University School of Public Health), and Diana Chapman Walsh (President Emerita of Wellesley College and IHI Board Member), amongst many others speaking on a variety of topics such as “Leading Change...and Managing Conflict”, “Dealing with Conflict”, “Difficult Situations”, “The IHI Leadership Model”, “Teamwork and Communications”, and “Leadership Cases and Discussion”. Nearly every state was represented, in addition to students from the United Kingdom, continental Europe, and Latin America. Boston College was represented by three of its nursing students, Nicole Tuccinardi ’12, Anne Harrington ’13, and Brooke Hopkins ’14. Students from all walks of healthcare were represented including medicine, nursing, engineering, public health, healthcare administration, health policy and law, pharmacy, and international affairs. I was assigned to work as a team member at a table where I was the only nurse and the only representative from Massachusetts.

I gained invaluable information on how to maneuver difficult conversations with those in superior positions and how to structure that type of conversation. Undoubtedly, every person will come across this situation in his or her career. As I looked around the room, I noticed I was not the only one taking diligent notes on the role-play scenario we watched ensue with volunteer students and Susan Block about an ICU patient who did not want to continue aggressive care while his sister (as his Health Care Proxy) wanted to continue the treatment. This was the most memorable aspect of the Academy.

Another stand-out presentation was delivered by Jo Ayoub, Director of Organizational Development and Staffing at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. She spoke about how to lead change. She identified different types of change, the Bridges Model and Transition Curve, which unfailingly occurs whenever there is change because it is a normal human response, the reasons why people resist change, and strategies to deal with people who are in denial and resistant of change as well as people who are exploring and committed to change.

Without question, this experience was unforgettable. I met people from all over the world, different backgrounds, points of view, and healthcare systems. Every lecture and speaker I heard will help me in my practice as a nurse. I began to understand what qualities and skills are required of a leader and how to effectively become one. I witnessed how healthcare providers from many disciplines work efficiently in teams, and how to improve outcomes for the number one priority of healthcare... the patient. I would recommend this Academy to any student involved or interested in healthcare. As a nursing student and now a new graduate I am excited to use this experience to inform my practice and begin my career with a renewed emphasis on patient safety, effective communication, and being a leader, not only with your colleagues, but a leader for your patients. It is important to jump at the opportunities presented to you because it will only enhance your confidence and skill as a nurse!

In March of 2012, Dorothy Jones visited the University of Navarra in Pamplona Spain. During this visit, she presented Dr. Mercedes Perez with her induction materials from Sigma Theta Tau International, Alpha Chi Chapter. Dr. Perez was inducted as a community member for Alpha Chi. The photo shows Dr. Perez with Dr. Maribel Sarciaba, Dean of the School of Nursing, a past inductee into Alpha Chi. Also included in the photo is Dr. Amparo Zaragoza, who is another Alpha Chi member. Over the years, these three members have contributed significantly to the growth of nursing in Spain. They developed the first Clinical Nurse Specialist Master’s program several years ago and in 2012 began enrolling doctoral students into the first PhD Nursing program. Dean Sarciaba is working with the Sigma Theta Tau International headquarters to develop a chapter in the School of Nursing at the University of Navarra. The faculty is most grateful for the support and encouragement provided by Alpha Chi members in helping to promote the development of an international honor society available to the nurses from Spain.