



Improving Quality of Life and Quality of Care

For some people, the best way to learn is by doing. When applied to nursing education, that's where clinical experiences come in. At Duke University School of Nursing, students benefit from accessing clinical expertise via partnerships with local organizations such as Duke Health and the Veterans Administration, and through preceptors at clinics and hospitals nationwide.



Sean Convoy

The school's newest clinical partner, Cohen Veterans Network (CVN), promises to make a significant contribution in one of the most critical areas of need: mental health care for veterans. The Cohen Network provides free mental health care for veterans and their families. **Sean Convoy DNP, PMHNP-BC**, assistant professor and a veteran of the military, said the national program strives to expand the mental health care workforce who serve this vulnerable and underserved population, adding that one of the biggest problems in

health care now is identifying and preparing psychiatric providers across the country.

"These CVN locations are free-standing mental health clinics across the country, and we are going to be able to partner with them to send our students for the last two semesters of their practicum to give them experience delivering psychiatric care," Convoy said. Funded by a four-year, \$2 million Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant, the program aims to support six students this year, eight the next, and then 10 in each of the final two years of the grant.

Convoy found the Cohen Network when he was researching ways to help veterans and their families access the mental health care they need. Partnering with the Department of Veterans Affairs had proven too unwieldy, so he contacted a friend at the Cohen Network. The more he learned, the more he knew Duke could help the Cohen Network and the Cohen Network could help Duke.

"The preceptor environment nationally for nurse practitioners is anemic," Convoy said. "Because we have students in a distance-based program from across the country, I wanted to be able to identify preceptor locations for them that are proximal to where they live." This is an opportunity for DUSON to develop a strategic relationship with a national organization, and for Cohen to partner with an educational leader that can help advance the cause of their nonprofit. Additionally, Convoy notes, the Cohen Network will have access to some of the best nursing students in the country who, through these months-long assignments, become excellent potential employees.

The Cohen Network's clinical model is

an excellent fit for DUSON students, Convoy said. "They employ a team-based concept of operation with a varied complement of mental health providers that includes psychologists, psychiatrists, licensed clinical social workers, psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners and licensed marriage and family therapists. Cohen's model of care creates an unmatched synergy that drives excellent patient outcomes," Convoy went on to say.

"We want to build and nurture this relationship because it is a great example of interprofessional practice and education."

This unique collaboration will also allow DUSON to collect, analyze and share information with the health community at large about these types of partnerships. "Cohen was extremely motivated to do this," Convoy said. "I expect to see a lot of good information that can be translated beyond the university to help inform what best practices are when it comes to partnership with a preceptorship."

Because part of the grant criteria includes tracking students post-graduation, Convoy said the partnership will generate information about whether students stay connected with supporting vulnerable and underserved populations. As one of the overriding goals of the partnership is to grow mental health providers, this knowledge will be invaluable.

"We're hoping these individuals bloom where they're planted and we really begin to build the infrastructure around all of the sites that Cohen has strategically picked," Convoy said. "I'm hoping for a legacy relationship with Cohen."

Another cutting-edge partnership that started earlier this summer focuses on Duke Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Quality Improvement Scholars Program. **Staci**