COURSE OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION
The Rural California Nursing Preceptorship Program (RCNP) is supported and is administered through the California State University, Chico Research Foundation. The program, which was initiated in 1975, provides a unique opportunity for senior level nursing students and graduate nurses to gain clinical experience while exploring career options in rural and semi-rural areas of Northern California. The program is available during summer and winter and is designed to last approximately four weeks. Placements are available in a number of different health care facilities. The program provides a valuable opportunity to explore career options in rural areas while granting a first-hand look at the quality of life that Northern California offers.

As a participant, you will be encouraged to take an active role in designing an experience that will best meet your particular needs. Whenever possible we try to place you in your geographic and specialty area of choice. Housing arrangements may be facilitated by RCNP when needed.

Students have found that they have benefited from the program in several ways. For most students, a focus on self-directed, independent learning makes the experience an important transitional step as they move from student nurse to graduate nurse. Other students have used this opportunity as a means of spending concentrated clinical time in a specialty area.

Rural Nursing
There are a variety of settings available to the student or graduate nurse who wishes to explore career options in a rural area. While educational requirements are the same for urban and rural nurses, there are distinct differences in style of practice. The rural nurse is more of a “generalist” and must be flexible in his/her role. Rural nursing emphasizes autonomy and independence. Medical personnel, particularly specialists, are less available and emergency services may be scarce.

In rural areas, social interaction is extremely important and the rural nurse must be willing to become involved with the community. The majority of patients seen by the nurse in a rural area are known personally as well as professionally. This allows for a more enriching nurse-patient relationship. A high level of community involvement and awareness promotes an integrated social system providing emotional and physical support to the members of a rural community.

For the nurse who is looking for an opportunity to utilize a variety of clinical skills, experience close personal contact with patients, families, and co-workers, and live in a beautiful scenic part of the country, rural nursing may be the right career choice.
OPERATION OF THE PROGRAM

Program Fees
All students are required to submit a $100 nonrefundable application fee with their application. If we are unable to accommodate you in the program, your application with fee will not be deposited (checks will be destroyed and money orders will be returned). In addition, there will be a $900 course fee which is to be paid closer to the time of the RCNP orientation. The orientation is usually conducted in early December for winter participants and early May for summer participants.

Priority Placements
50% of placement slots are reserved for current CSU, Chico, Butte and Shasta College students. The remaining slots are filled with students from other colleges and universities, RN Refresher students, and RN graduates.

Selected Applicants
Selected applicants are those who: 1) submit complete applications, 2) receive strong recommendations, and 3) communicate effectively.

Additional Requirements
After acceptance into the program, students will be expected to purchase Professional Liability Insurance. In addition, students may also be asked to obtain: a background check and/or drug screen; additional TB testing; a recent work place physical; and/or current mask-fitting in accordance with their placement site’s policy. In addition, some sites have specific hospital orientation requirements that must be met prior to beginning clinical practice.

Placement Period
Preceptorships generally last 4 weeks, and comprise a total of 150 hours of clinical practice. Winter preceptorships begin several days after Christmas. In summer, there is more flexibility with start dates. Here, preceptorships begin as early as late May, and as late as mid July.

CLINICAL OPTIONS

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS AVAILABLE
Our placement areas offer a wide variety of clinical experiences (see Available Sites), extending as far north as the Oregon border and as far south as Bishop near Mammoth Lakes. We encourage the student to select sites that are of most interest to them. We try to accommodate our students whenever possible.

CLINICAL OPTIONS
RCNP offers placements in the areas of acute care, home health, and hospice. While not every clinical option will be available in every geographic location, we will do our best to place students where they can best meet their own individual clinical objectives.

THE PRECEPTOR STUDENT RELATIONSHIP
Preceptors are chosen by the placement facility. Preceptors are not financially reimbursed for their services -- they usually participate because they are enthusiastic about their job, enjoy teaching and sharing ideas, and are committed to the nursing profession.

Students will be working closely with their preceptor during their placement period. The preceptor will help the student to identify the kinds of activities that will best fulfill learning objectives, assist with new procedures, and in general help acquaint the student with the role and responsibilities of the working RN. The preceptor will complete and review with the student a written performance at the end of the preceptorship.
HOUSING
RCNP housing providers are available to students in need of housing. RCNP screens all potential housing providers and relies heavily on evaluations from past students for housing referrals.

In most cases, the cost of housing is $350 per month which includes use of a kitchen or in some cases a private kitchenette. Students are responsible for their own meals, however sometimes the student and provider make arrangements to include the student in family meals.

For most students, the close personal involvement with their host families is one of the most meaningful aspects of the preceptorship experience. These “live-in” situations put the student directly in touch with what it means to live in a rural community. Students learn to appreciate the importance of local traditions, events, gossip, and politics. They also experience the frustration of limited shopping and cultural opportunities; but the satisfaction achieved in terms of a greater sense of community, combined with a relaxed pace of life, are positive and lasting experiences for the student. Students and housing providers may form close friendships that include letters and visits, long after the clinical placement has ended.