RURAL NURSING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SIMULATION

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Purpose/Aims: The purpose of the project is to describe the utilization of multi-patient simulation to bridge the gap between classroom theory and practical application of leadership principles and concepts. The simulation includes student application of TeamSTEPPS® strategies to enhance the development of leadership expertise in a rural hospital setting.

Rationale/Background: Leadership, teamwork, collaboration, prioritization, and delegation are vital nursing competencies requiring rigorous academic attention. Changes must be made in opportunities for nursing student learning to improve student knowledge, skills, and attitudes in preparation for the realities of professional practice. Due to limitations in actual clinical settings, there are minimal opportunities for authentic application of leadership concepts, prioritization, and delegation. Simulation provides an innovative strategy for refining nursing education’s approach to developing strong leadership skills.

Brief descriptions of the undertaking/best practice, including the approaches, methods, or process used: The data-based evaluative project involves senior leadership students managing six simulated patients in a fully functioning unit in a rural community hospital. Live actors and high-fidelity simulators portray the patients during a two-hour scenario with changes in patient condition and hospital events scripted every 20 minutes. Students are given an overview of the patients and expected to prepare for the live simulation as if preparing for a scheduled clinical experience. The simulation includes interview of the live actors following the conclusion of the scenario and debriefing to facilitate students’ self-reflection, peer evaluation, professional communication, and group problem-solving. Data collection includes post-simulation, anonymous student evaluations of preparation, performance, and benefit based upon a five-point Likert scale.

Outcomes achieved/documentated: Evaluation data indicates that student performance and perception of benefit are influenced by the degree of student preparation for the simulation. Outcomes of the simulation include student recognition of the influence of effective teamwork and communication on patient safety and ability to apply prioritization and delegation skills to effective nursing leadership performance. Through the use of simulation, students demonstrated an ability to bridge the gap between classroom theory and practical application of conceptual knowledge. Evaluation data also included ideas for improvement and requests for more simulation opportunities. Student response supports simulation as a valuable experience. Faculty identified that application of TeamSTEPPS® strategies resulted in positive patient outcomes and enhanced prioritization as well as team performance among students.

Conclusions, emphasizing implications for rural health and educational practices, and recommendations for research or future undertakings: Multi-patient simulation is an effective environment for providing baccalaureate nursing student opportunities in leadership, teamwork, collaboration, prioritization, delegation and integration of TeamSTEPPS® in a rural setting. Continued refinement of the leadership simulation may include interprofessional experiences as well as increased complexity such as conflict, incivility, tardiness, and team performance challenges. Suggestions for further research include pre and post simulation surveys to examine student confidence in application of leadership knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and the effect of standardization of simulation experiences across curriculum.