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Standardizing Graduate Simulation to Increase Nurse Practitioner Student Competency: An Urgent Need

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As the demand for highly skilled nurse practitioners (NPs) continues to rise, ensuring the clinical readiness of NP graduates has never been more crucial. Traditional didactic methods, while foundational, often fall short in equipping students with the necessary hands-on

experience required for the complexities of modern healthcare. As educators, it is imperative that we create standardizing simulation experiences in graduate nursing programs to bridge this gap and enhance student competency.

The Current Landscape

At the University of Colorado College of Nursing, we have observed significant variability in the preparedness of our NP students. This inconsistency has been echoed by clinical site preceptors who have reported uneven levels of readiness among students. Despite the recognized benefits of simulation-based education (SBE), its integration into the curriculum has been inconsistent, leading to missed opportunities for optimizing student outcomes.

The Power of Simulation-Based Education

Simulation-based education offers a controlled, risk-free environment where students can hone their clinical skills, make critical decisions, and experience the consequences of their actions without

endangering patient safety. The evidence supporting SBE is robust: it improves clinical competency, enhances confidence, and promotes quality and safety in patient care (Griffith et al., 2022; Sim et al., 2022). Moreover, SBE aligns seamlessly with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which advocates for learning through concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Our Proposed Solution

To address these issues, we propose a structured, standardized approach to simulation for all advanced practice nursing students at our institution. This initiative, supported by a \$20,000 grant, aims to develop and implement simulation experiences that are consistent across all specialties. These simulations will focus on critical competencies as measured by the Nurse Practitioner Student Competency Assessment (NPSCA) instrument, ensuring that all students meet a high standard of clinical readiness.

Implementation and Expected Outcomes

Our quasi-experimental longitudinal study will compare the outcomes of students participating in standardized simulation experiences with those undergoing traditional training. We anticipate that the

intervention group will demonstrate superior clinical reasoning, decision-making, and overall competency. Furthermore, we expect preceptors to report higher levels of preparedness among these students, and for the students themselves to express greater confidence and readiness for clinical practice.

The Broader Implications

The implications of our study extend beyond our institution. By providing a validated framework for standardized simulation, we aim to set a precedent for other nursing programs to follow. The adoption of such standards could lead to widespread improvements in NP education, ultimately benefiting the healthcare system as a whole by producing practitioners who are better prepared to meet the challenges of their profession.

Conclusion

The future of nursing education lies in embracing innovative teaching methods that transcend traditional classroom instruction. Standardized simulation represents a critical step forward in this evolution. It is imperative that nursing schools recognize and act on the need for such reforms to ensure that our graduates are not only knowledgeable but also adept at applying their knowledge in real-world settings.

By addressing the need for standard-

ized simulation, we can ensure that our NP students are not only competent but also confident in their abilities to deliver high-quality patient care. This initiative is not just an enhancement of our educational practices but a necessary evolution to meet the demands of contemporary healthcare.

We call on educational leaders, faculty, and stakeholders in the nursing community to support and invest in standardized simulation initiatives. By doing so, we can collectively enhance the competency of our future nurse practitioners, ensuring they are ready to provide the highest quality of care to their patients. ■

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Coroner Makes Connections with Forensic Nursing

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As a former Nursing Simulationist and Sim Creator, Forensic Nurse and now as a Coroner, I strongly believe that interprofessional teamwork is of great importance when providing care to others. It should be more than a concept and put into practice. I believe the quality of our healthcare is based on professional knowledge that is evidence-based. It is my continued goal to introduce these forensic nursing con-

cepts, not only verbally, but also through a practical hands-on way, while students are still learning different nursing education strategies and possible career paths.

I connected with Regis University-Loretta Heights School of Nursing, to provide the nursing students with a simulated death scenario. Through actively participating in the scenario, I wanted to help students gain experience in what to