Assessing and Correlating Nursing Clinical Decision Making to NCLEX-RN® Outcomes

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Purpose: Clinical Decision Making (Nursing Clinical Judgment) is the foundation of nursing care. This form of judgment consists of 1) recognizing cues 2) generating hypotheses 3) judging hypotheses 4) taking action and 5) evaluating outcomes (Muntean 2015). Determining a student’s ability to implement Nursing Clinical Judgment (NCJ) in the clinical setting is paramount to positive patient outcomes. Deficient clinical decision-making could be caused by lack of content knowledge resulting in diminished recognition of cues and therefore decisions will be based on insufficient information. Nurses make better decisions with clinical experience therefore novice nurses will have limited experience in the clinical setting. This limited experience with identifying patient care problems leads to an increased potential for errors in decision-making (Thiele, Holloway, Murphy & Pendarvis, 1991).

Methods: The correlational research design will be conducted with a convenience sample of self-reporting, first-time NCLEX-RN® test takers. NCLEX-RN® pass/fail will be correlated with decision-making performance on NCLEX-RN®-style items contained in a Qbank. This Qbank data will be analyzed to determine performance on the test item: is the student able to identify the correct topic of the test item, does the nurse need more assessment data of does the nurse need to implement an action, does Maslow’s hierarchy of needs apply to the answer, are ABCs (airway, breathing, circulation) relevant, and do the outcomes make sense? The correlational study will assist with determining if the variables of decision-making are related to NCLEX-RN® performance.

Results: The study findings will determine the students’ performance on the Qbank items. The data gathered will show if the student correctly or incorrectly answered the item. Additional data collected will show the coding of the item based on a decision-making methodology and whether the students’ performance in each category (topic of question, assessment/implementation, Maslow, ABCs, determine outcomes) correlates to their NCLEX-RN® outcome (pass/fail).

Conclusion: Analysis and correlation of the data will provide guidance for nursing graduates and faculty during NCLEX-RN® preparation. Poor performance and a negative outcome (NCLEX-RN® failure) will allow students to plan for increased review and remediation of decision-making capabilities. Additional remediation tools can be provided prior to completion of NCLEX-RN® preparation.

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Keywords: Clinical Decision Making, Kaplan Decision Tree and Nursing Clinical Judgment

References:

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Content Outline:
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Objectives:
- Correlate a student’s ability to utilize a decision making model to correctly answer NCLEX-RN®-style assessment items.
  - Determine gaps in the student’s ability based on their performance on steps in the decision making model.
- Correlate the student’s ability with their outcome on the NCLEX-RN®.

Background: Novice nurses are called upon to make clinical decisions often without benefit of adequate experience. Only 20% of employers report being satisfied with the novice nurses’ clinical-decision-making abilities (Saintsing, Gibson & Pennington 2011). The quality and safety of patient care depends on the nursing care delivered. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) in the United States is undergoing a study to construct a tool to measure a higher-order cognitive construct (Nursing Clinical Judgment) in nursing licensure candidates.
Description: Clinical Decision Making models describe the process nurses use to make decisions. The information-processing model provides a systematic framework, which enables nurses to describe how they arrive at decisions (Banning, 2007). One example of a clinical decision-making model is the Kaplan Decision Tree (KDT), utilized in the Kaplan Review Course (preparation for the NCLEX). The steps of the Kaplan Decision Tree mirror the steps of the Nursing Clinical Judgment model as described by Muntean (2015). The KDT provides an algorithm for nursing students to utilize in answering NCLEX-RN®-style test items. A visual figure will be provided to align the NCSBN model with the Kaplan Decision Tree.

Multiple student records will be reviewed to determine student performance on the NCLEX-RN®-style test items from the Qbank. Incorrect Qbank items will be analyzed to determine when the incorrect step of the decision tree is selected. Cumulative review of the missed steps will be compared with NCLEX® outcomes to determine any correlation with specific steps and failure.

Evaluation: Student performance on specific steps will be analyzed and correlated with NCLEX® performance. Remediation for decision-making can be designed/developed to improve certain decision-making steps such as cue recognition, hypothesis updating, task complexity (Muntean, 2017).

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