Welcome to the Nursing Profession: Fostering Professionalism in Senior Nursing Students

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Purpose:
Assist senior nursing students in cultivating a professional identity in the nursing profession by attending a national conference. Through this experience, students can internalize nursing’s core values and perspectives, an integral part of practicing the art and science of nursing.

To Develop a Professional Identity:
• To give holistic, safe, and effective care, students should graduate from nursing school with the skills and knowledge of a nurse and the identity and values of a professional nurse.
• An essential component of a Baccalaureate education is to learn and adapt nursing’s professional values (AACN, 2008).
• Faculty must facilitate experiences that help students begin to feel like a nurse, act as a nurse, and ultimately “be” a nurse (Benner et al., 2010, p. 16).

Method:
Fifty-nine senior nursing students attended the 67th annual National Student Nurses Association Convention which allowed:
• Participants to attend sessions on practice issues/trends
• Network with other student nurses and nursing professionals
• Talk with recruiters and professional organizations
• Gain information on career and continued advanced education

Students were required to attend one day (eight hours) of the conference.

A pre/post evaluation of the students’ professional identity was conducted.
• The Macleod Clark Professional Identity Scale for undergraduate nursing students was utilized for this purpose
• Participation in the evaluation was voluntary
• The scale was disseminated by electronic Qualtrics survey to participants

Macleod Clark Professional Identity Scale (MCPIS-9):
• MCPIS-9 is a quantitative tool developed by Macleod Clark et al. (2006) to measure professional identity in healthcare students
• It has since been validated for use with undergraduate nursing students
• The evaluation consists of eight items that are ranked using a Likert response scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

1. I feel like I am a member of this profession.
2. I feel I have strong ties with members of this profession.
3. I am often ashamed to admit that I am studying for this profession.
4. I find myself making excuses for belonging to this profession.
5. I am pleased to belong to this profession.
6. I can identify positively with members of this profession.
7. Being a member of this profession is important to me.
8. I feel I share characteristics with other members of the profession.

Results:
• No statistical significance noted in pre and post-conference scoring.
• Attending a conference was not sufficient to increase professional identity in undergraduate students.

Limitations:
• Limited sample size
• Recruitment was limited to undergraduate students in the last semester of their nursing program at one university
• Only one intervention was initiated, and pre/post scoring was only one week apart
• Only quantifiable data was collected
• Considering the nature of the study and the sample size qualitative data may have produced richer results with more depth, detail, and encouragement for participants to expand on their responses.

Future Research:
• Use a qualitative research method
• Assess students at different intervals throughout the undergraduate nursing program and postgraduate to identify when undergraduate nursing student gains their professional identity and what factors play a role in that development.
• Add demographic measurements that may add perspective (i.e., gender, age, previous experience).
• A guided method to help them learn from attending a conference might enhance the experience.

References:
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Macleod Clark Professional Identity Scale for undergraduate nursing students (MCPIS-9) was conducted.

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