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Essentials of a BSN Education and Students With Physical Disabilities: Faculty Perceptions

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Purposes/Aims

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of BSN faculty regarding the abilities of persons with physical disabilities (PWPD) to complete a nursing education. Results help fill the gap in the literature regarding the academic barriers PWPD face while pursuing, or attempting to pursue, a professional nursing education.

Rationale/Conceptual Basis/Background

The accrediting body for most BSN programs is the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). The standards used by CCNE are the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice (BSN Essentials). This document contains the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes which BSN students should demonstrate at graduation. CCNE is not overly directive in the implementation of curriculum or evaluation methods as long as the program can demonstrate achievement of programmatic (student) success. The overarching goal is to graduate nurse generalists able to provide safe, high quality care to the adult population.

Historically a BSN curriculum – designed by the nursing programs themselves - focused on the provision of acute, bedside nursing care because this reflected nursing practice. However, acute care continues to be emphasized in nursing education over community-based nursing roles even as more nursing care is moved to the outpatient setting. Part of this is due to clinical placement constraints, but also can be attributed to the view held by nurse educators whose experiences may be heavily based in acute care – and were themselves educated with this focus.

For nurses and students to provide care in the acute care setting certain physical abilities are required, such as standing/walking for up to 12 hours, assessment of patients in hospital beds, and participating fully, and quickly, during patient emergencies. There is generally little debate about these expectations in the acute care setting. However, since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, increasing numbers of individuals with disabilities are expressing desire to enter the nursing profession. A natural collision is occurring between the traditional, acute-care educational approach, where individuals with disabilities may face barriers providing care, and the vast array of other nursing care settings, where individuals with physical limitations may flourish. Can nursing education expand its vision to provide a welcoming education for students with physical disabilities?

As researchers, we are interested in exploring the perceptions held by nursing faculty about the abilities of PWPD to successfully complete an undergraduate nursing

education. Understanding these perceptions is the first step in a coordinated process for changing the culture of nursing education and creating opportunities for students with physical disabilities.

Methods

This is an exploratory, descriptive study with nursing faculty using a survey methodology. An online survey tool is being utilized that measures perceptions regarding physically disabled students and their ability to meet the 22 outcomes from Essential IX: Baccalaureate Generalist Nursing Practice from the AACN Essentials for Baccalaureate Education. The study sample will be recruited from faculty in BSN programs.

Results

Data collection will occur between January and May 2019. Analysis will follow.

Implications

As PWPB continue to expand their personal goals, nursing education will need to adapt. The first step to change the culture is to understand the concerns of faculty. By utilizing the BSN Essentials to determine what faculty believes is problematic, a systematic approach to clinical and lab design which addresses these concerns, meets BON regulations and accreditation requirements, can be incorporated into BSN curriculum.

Title:

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Keywords:

Accommodations, Nursing Education and Persons with Physical Disabilities

References:

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Abstract Summary:

Increasing numbers of students with functional disabilities are eager to pursue nursing careers. However, they often meet a roadblock during the application or progression steps of nursing education. Changing the culture of nursing education requires first understanding faculty perceptions of what is essential in a BSN education.

Content Outline:

Introduction

People with physical disabilities (PWP) are underrepresented in nursing education. There are multiple social and educational reasons for this phenomenon, but faculty willingness to expand their worldview about the essentials of nursing education is the foundation of a cultural change.

Body

Social Influences: Youth and young adults with disabilities may have nursing career goals but lack guidance and role models to pursue them. In reality there are many nursing roles that can be successfully fulfilled by individuals lacking full mobility or physical ability.

Nursing Programs, Regulations, and Accreditation: BSN curriculum is designed by nursing faculty but must align with State Boards of Nursing regulations and the requirements of accrediting bodies. Clinical experiences, where the predominant challenge is for PWP continue to lean heavily to acute care even as nursing care moves to more community-based settings.

Study Design: Data will be gathered from BSN faculty members using an online survey tool. It measures perceptions regarding physically disabled students and their ability to meet the 22 outcomes from Essential IX: Baccalaureate Generalist Nursing Practice from the AACN Essentials for Baccalaureate Education (BSN Essentials). Data collection will occur from January to May 2019. BSN Essential elements that reflect higher levels of faculty concern will be analyzed.

Conclusions

The first step to design a comprehensive, equivalent BSN education for students with physical disabilities is understanding the concerns of faculty. Interpreting results utilizing the BSN Essentials creates the foundation for a systematic approach to this cultural change.

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