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Best Practices in Undergraduate Nursing Education: Concept-Based Curriculum

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Purpose: The purpose of this study was to determine best practices in the development, implementation, and evaluation of concept-based curriculum (CBC) in undergraduate nursing education programs across the United States (U.S.). CBC is a teaching method that enhances learning by eliminating information overload and memorization; allowing students to think critically by linking knowledge gained in the didactic setting or from previous experiences to apply to clinical practice. CBC is currently implemented in some nursing education programs across the U.S. To date, development and implementation of CBC in undergraduate nursing education has been optional.

Methods: After receiving IRB approval, Program Directors from 30 undergraduate nursing education programs who reported desiring to or currently utilizing CBC were sent an email with an introductory explanation of the study and a link to a voluntary survey. This was a 13-question mixed methods survey with quantitative questions and qualitative free-text boxes. The survey was distributed using Survey Monkey, which provided anonymous, non-identified responses. The results from the quantitative section were analyzed by a statistician, while the qualitative section responses were analyzed and compared line-by-line by both researchers, who agreed saturation was achieved.

Results: Concept-based curricular approaches of development, implementation, and evaluation were assessed to determine improvement in critical thinking and critical judgment as students applied new knowledge within the frame of concepts, analyzing and applying information. Program Directors were asked to define CBC and identify areas of focus, along with sharing priorities in the development and planning stages of implementing CBC. Positive and negative learning experiences, and challenges during the implementation phase were also collected. Program Directors were identified implementation strategies to optimize success, active learning strategies, and adaptations to teaching methods. Active learning methods that were reported included: tickets to class, one-minute papers, think-pair-share, unfolding case studies, role play, quizzes, and flipped classrooms. Outcome measures determined students' application of concepts to patient care delivery.

Conclusion: Content-laden curriculum in traditional nursing education programs has created an environment where faculty struggle to teach all of the content. Changes in technology and nursing shortages, along with a shift to population and global health, chronic disease management, and health promotion have motivated educators to re-examine nurse education curricula. The results of this study supported the literature

review in that CBC enables synthesis and transferability of nursing knowledge across multiple situations as the concepts present logical solutions. Programmatic implementation strategies and outcome metrics were identified that may serve as benchmarks for programs and regulators. To implement any type of curricular changes, faculty must be willing to adopt new methods of teaching, while fostering active learning and critical thinking skills. CBC is ideal for nursing education as nurses' practice conceptually by focusing on the patient regardless of the medical diagnosis, grouping information between patients.

Title:

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Keywords:

concept-based curriculum, curriculum development and curriculum evaluation

Abstract Summary:

The purpose of this study was to determine best practices in development, implementation, and evaluation of concept-based curriculum in undergraduate nursing education in the United States. Thirty Program Directors were sent a 13-question mixed methods survey. Concept-based curricular approaches were assessed for improvement in critical thinking and critical judgment.

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Author Summary: Dr. Lee has incorporated concept-based curriculum (CBC) in nursing education for many years. In 2011, she participated in developing CBC for ADN programs in Texas. In 2014, she contributed to developing CBC in BSN, RN-to-BSN, and MSN programs. As an Education Consultant at the Texas Board of Nursing, Dr. Lee evaluated the success of programs implementing CBC, making recommendations for transitioning from traditional systems-based curriculum, identifying areas for improvement, and for overcoming barriers.

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