Building Nursing Students' Capacity to Provide Supportive Feedback to Peers

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Purpose:
Peer review is a key process in demonstrating accountability to practice standards in the nursing discipline, and accountability to practice standards is essential to nursing’s self-regulation of practice (Goble, Langford, Vincent, & Powers, 2017; LeClair-Smith et al., 2016). Every professional nurse is expected to participate in peer review; however, nurses and nursing students say that providing feedback to peers is not their job, it makes them anxious, and they have not been prepared with the right communication skills to give supportive feedback to peers (Altmiller et al., 2018; Whitney, 2016). Nursing students need to learn to provide supportive feedback to their peers in the academic setting so that they are prepared to enter nursing practice ready to participate in peer review that supports high-quality nursing care and patient safety (Altmiller et al., 2018; Hastie, Fahy, Parratt, & Grace, 2016). The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of a peer review lesson on nursing students’ quality of feedback to their peers and to explore whether their sense of value for the peer review process influences their capacity to create high-quality, supportive peer feedback.

Methods:
Knowledge of peer review principles, quality of peer feedback, and student motivation to provide supportive feedback to peers were measured at three time points during the semester. Findings from an analysis of covariance revealed that the peer review lesson had a positive impact on knowledge and quality of peer feedback in a simulated context. In an authentic peer feedback context, a conditional process analysis revealed a moderated mediation effect, with knowledge mediating an indirect effect of the peer review lesson on quality of feedback to real peers. This effect was statistically significant only for students who had high levels of value for providing high-quality feedback to peers.

Results:
The results of this study provide new empirical evidence for two essential elements that work together to support students’ capacity to provide high-quality feedback to peers: knowledge of peer review principles and value for the process of providing feedback to peers. Neither element is sufficient on its own to support high-quality peer-to-peer feedback between students. Knowledge and value must work in a synergistic relationship to facilitate the peer review process through actualization of high-quality, supportive peer-to-peer feedback. Implications for teaching practice include (1) making a knowledge-building lesson available to nursing students before they participate in peer review, (2) creating a classroom culture of value for providing feedback to peers, (3) reconceptualizing nurse educators’ approach to preparing students for peer review in professional nursing.

Conclusion:
Faculty can be equipped to create educational experiences for nursing students that prepare them to provide high-quality feedback to peers by scaffolding their learning with knowledge- and confidence-building support (Lai, 2016). This study produced an empirically tested peer review lesson shown to increase knowledge of peer review principles. The lesson will be made available online to presentation attendees for reuse. Recommendations for creating a classroom culture that supports student perceptions of value for peer review will also be offered.

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Keywords: nursing students, peer feedback and peer review

Abstract Summary: Nurses need opportunities to learn how to provide high-quality, supportive feedback to peers in a culture that supports value for peer feedback. Learn how you can create a classroom environment that builds knowledge of and value for peer feedback strategies with a tested peer review lesson and evidence-based educational strategies.

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Author Summary: Joni Tornwall, PhD, RN, is Manager of Instructional Services in the College of Nursing at The Ohio State University. She develops and teaches courses in the health professions and education. Her research interests are learning technologies in nursing education and preparing nursing students to participate effectively in peer review in the workplace.