Impact of a Clinical Peer-Mentoring Program on Nursing Student’s Stress, Self-Confidence, and Clinical Judgment

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Purpose: In nursing education, students experience high levels of stress from a variety of curricular activities. Literature suggests that the most stressful part of a student nurses’ education is the first introduction to patient care in the hospital environment. Faculty reports that novice nursing students are exhibiting high levels of stress, lacking in confidence, and struggling to understand their role, thus compromising a productive environment and delaying the learning process. With that in mind, the Clinical Peer Mentoring (CPM) program was established and incorporated into the nursing curriculum with a goal of reducing stress and enhancing self-confidence and clinical judgment. The aim of the study was to decrease the stress level and improve self-confidence and clinical judgment in the second term nursing students who provided patient care during the initial clinical days in acute care facilities.

Methods: The study design incorporated a pre and post intervention to measure the effectiveness of the CPM program and detecting change in stress, self-confidence, and clinical judgment. Two instruments were used to evaluate the outcomes: The Clinical Experience Assessment (Kleehammer, Hart, & Keck, 1990) and Program Evaluation Surveys (Harmer, Huffman, & Johnson, 2011) along with reflective questions. The fourth term clinical peer mentors (N=3) and second term nursing students (N=29) comprised the convenience sample. Second term students were randomly assigned to two groups: control (N=15) or intervention (N=14).

Results: The data demonstrated that all participants who collaborated with a peer mentor gained self-confidence and improved clinical judgment. Evaluation of the stress variable revealed that stress levels are equally high among all participants with various demographic descriptors and are not affected by previous healthcare experiences. The small sample size of this study can explain the failure to detect the statistically significant change in the levels of stress pre- and post- intervention between the control and intervention groups. Responses to reflective open-ended questions provided qualitative data to supplement the quantitative data analysis. An overwhelmingly positive response for the CPM program was received from both the second term students and fourth term clinical peer mentors. Intervention group students believed that having a clinical peer mentor helped them to adjust and cope with the stressful environment of an acute care facility.

Conclusion: This study contributes to the generation of knowledge for best educational practices. It provides a framework for establishing the Clinical Peer Mentoring program and incorporating it into the nursing curriculum. The information generated by this study adds to the methods of improving initial clinical experiences for students who are exposed to the acute medical-surgical environment for the first time.
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Keywords:
clinical peer mentoring, initial clinical exposure and nursing student

Abstract Summary:
Development and implementation of the Clinical Peer Mentoring (CPM) Program in the undergraduate nursing curriculum as an educational strategy to address student’s stress and anxiety with the first introduction to patient care in the hospital environment and to facilitate student learning, self-confidence, and clinical judgment.

References:

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Author Summary: Dr. Julia Canipe has a primary interest in nursing student success and the novel strategies to improve the student’s outcomes. Primarily, she focuses her career to investigate student success strategies that alleviate undue stress in an academic environment. Of particular interest, the clinical component of nursing education warrants the focus of her research and attention. In addition, her daily
interactions with students provide a close insight of stressors that directly relate to the student success.