Increasing Student Competence and Clinical Confidence Using a Multimodal Approach

Nancy McMenamy MS, RN, CNE, Nola Schrum MS, RN, CCRN, Cynthia Bain MSN, RN, CNE and Deborah Tapler PhD, RN, CNE

First level nursing students are often overwhelmed with the demands of nursing school. They are taught introductory clinical skills that are basic to a solid foundation for clinical practice. To increase competency, confidence and continuity between all instructors, including adjuncts, and decrease student anxiety; the course team developed a multimodal approach to ensure student success.

**Increased competencies:** The students are required to pass a mid-semester skills check-off. Skills included for competency validation are subcutaneous administration, intramuscular administration, indwelling urinary catheter, and sterile wet-to-moist dressing change. Skill competency is assured before patient contact.

**Increased confidence:** Success with mid-semester check-offs increases student confidence in the clinical setting.

**Increased continuity:** Numerous faculty members and adjuncts increase the occurrences of discrepancies in skills validation. This results in student confusion. Use of a standardized skill procedure form by all instructors for validation of skills enhances consistency between observations.

**Decreased anxiety:** Students report high levels of anxiety with check-offs and in the clinical setting when performing skills. Skills validation by positive success at check-offs lowers anxiety.

**Multimodal Approaches**

Each lab practicum skill was demonstrated and videotaped by a seasoned faculty member. These videos provide a resource that the student can access at anytime with an internet connection. The videos reinforce the skills learned in lab. Promotion of continuity between instructors and students is enhanced by a single, correct skills procedure for validation in check-offs.

**Practice of Skills using Simulated Experiences**

Simulation case studies were developed to improve the students’ psychomotor aptitudes. The experiences provide opportunities for critical thinking with faculty guidance. Important safety procedures were acquired reinforcement of correct technique or remediation for incorrect techniques.

**Supervised Open Lab Practice Times**

The students had access to many open lab times supervised by faculty or lab personnel to practice the practicum skills. This extra time afforded opportunities to acquire reinforcement of correct technique or remediation for incorrect techniques.

105 students were surveyed via BB assignment about their experiences utilizing the various modalities. They were asked if they accessed the skills videos produced by the faculty and if they thought the videos contributed to their success.

Ninety-four percent of the responding students accessed the online videos. Student comments regarding the faculty skills demonstration videos included: “It was helpful to see what was expected of us and reduced anxiety.” “It clarified areas I had doubt.” “Yes, every clinical instructor said different steps/order, so I thought they provided consistency.”

Eighty-six percent of students stated that the demonstration videos reduced their level of anxiety about check-offs.

Eighty-two percent of students attended an open lab session for practice of skills outside of scheduled course lab time. Students comments included: “Yes, time to watch/help others and practice on my own.” “Gave me hands on practice and peer involvement in teaching the proper procedure.” “No, but I wish I did.” [comments from a student who did not attend an open lab]

**Future Recommendations**

The skills demonstration videos must follow the check-off procedures exactly. The fundamental principles are consistent between lab sessions and between faculty. Students know what is expected to validate the skills during check-offs. The faculty are encouraged to stress the importance of the fundamental principles of safety and continuity in response to dynamic clinical situations.

**References**


Texas Woman’s University, The Houston J. and Florence A. Doswell College of Nursing, Dallas, Texas