Debriefing in Laboratory Experiences in Undergraduate Nursing Education: Consolidating Learning and Creating Meaning

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THE PROJECT
Debriefing is an experiential learning strategy that facilitates feedback and reflective thinking through guided discussion.

A working group of lab tutors was established, a manual on debriefing developed and a debriefing feedback tool was created and administered to students following lab experiences where debriefing was introduced.

The purpose of this pilot project was to uncover student perspectives of how debriefing following a variety of laboratory experiences (psychomotor skill learning, standardized patient interaction and high fidelity simulation) shaped their cognitive, affective and social learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

• Debriefing is considered to be integral to human patient simulation (HPS) learning experiences.
• In nursing education, researchers have studied relationships between HPS debriefing and clinical judgment, knowledge acquisition, situational awareness, self-efficacy, self-confidence and clinical reasoning.
• Investigations to examine the relationship between different approaches to HPS debriefing and learning outcomes have been conducted.
• Researchers have carried out qualitative studies to uncover phenomena including students’ perspectives of learning through HPS debriefing and faculty debriefing approaches.
• There are limited findings that reflect the use of debriefing in other lab experiences.

Essential Components:
• Provide a safe, nonjudgmental environment for sharing and learning.
• The debriefing process must be planned with defined learning objectives that are clearly articulated.
• Debriefing should occur immediately after learning experiences.
• Analytical questioning to promote the transfer of learning to relevant clinical situations.
• Adequate time must be allotted to debrief.

Outcomes:
Cognitive
• Develop reflective thinking
• Enhance self-efficacy and the ability to identify gaps in learning and additional learning needs
• Increase analytical thinking, clinical reasoning, and ability to apply knowledge
• Facilitate self awareness and metacognition
• Promote counterfactual thinking to imagine and anticipate what would be done if faced with a similar encounter in clinical practice

Affective
• Express feelings and explore emotions
• Enhance connectedness with peers

Social
• Recognize the importance of a safe space to discuss issues
• Peer support
• Create personal meaning and multiple perspectives in practice

THE OUTCOMES

Today, the most meaningful aspect of the debriefing opportunity was:
• “Talking about experiences and gaining insight and direction.”
• “Listening and connecting with peers.”
• “Recognizing the patient’s experience.”

Common Themes
• Reflecting on practice and identifying what needs improving
• Identifying gaps of knowledge
• Learning from others
• Exploring how the experience made us feel
• Giving and receiving feedback

Today, the most challenging aspect of the debriefing opportunity was:
• “Discussing emotional aspects.”
• “Critiquing other people’s nursing practice.”
• “Reflecting and dealing with ambiguity.”

Common Themes
• Many students responded with not applicable (N/A)
• Trying to think of something to contribute to group discussion
• Giving and receiving feedback

In your opinion, what is essential for a good debriefing?
• “Asking about experiences, evoked feelings, deeper meaning, take home messages.”
• “For good debriefing there has to be trust and respect in the group because it is a learning process.”

Common Themes
• An engaged and active peer group
• Positive, safe, supportive, non-judgmental learning environment

Learning is dependent on the integration of experience and reflection. What did you learn today, that you will take with you into your future nursing practice?
• “Separating my personal beliefs from my client’s care.”
• “The importance of therapeutic communication.”
• “That others are learning with me and it is OK to work as a team.”

Common Themes
• Enhanced judgments and reasoning skills
• Integration of knowledge and practice
• Appreciating the patient’s experience

LIMITATIONS and FUTURE DIRECTIONS

• Pilot Project
• Methodological coherence
• Voluntary participation
• Convenience sample
• Pilot findings support future research initiatives

References:
Cantrell, 2008; Chronister & Bowen, 2012; Cochrane, 2012; Dufresne, 2012; Dung, 2012; Ely, 2012; Fang, 2012; Grant et al., 2014; Jaeger, 2012; Hallmark, 2010; Henneman et al., 2014; Huseb & Brown, 2012; Jaeger, 2012; Lochrie, 2012; Loge, 2011; Loge, Hager & Galagher, 2012; Koch, Bowerman & Norsen, 2013; Kupper et al., 2012; Marian et al., 2015; O’Neill et al., 2014; Shinnick et al., 2011; Walsh, 2010; Weaver, 2014
The debriefing opportunity facilitated discussion about the lab experience.

I found the debriefing opportunity useful in facilitating my own reflection on my own experience.

N = 378; 100% response rate