CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALIST DESIGNED CERTIFICATION PREPARATION COURSE

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PURPOSE

The purpose was to implement a CNS-led medical-surgical certification preparation course for medical-surgical nurses.

SIGNIFICANCE

The CNS competencies provide a basis for CNSs’ design of a medical-surgical preparation course.

Nursing certification may have many benefits to organizations through:

- Increased nursing competence and confidence
- Improved patient care
- Promotion of professional growth
- Indication of knowledge and expertise in a specialty

BACKGROUND

There is no formal medical-surgical certification preparation course at the organization.

This course was requested by practicing medical-surgical nurses and institutional leadership.

- Magnet status and career ladders elevate the importance of attaining nursing certifications.
- CNSs’ design of a certification preparation course has received little attention in the academic literature.

METHODS

- Two CNSs collaborated to implement the medical-surgical certification preparation course by:
  - Planning each preparation session
  - Advertising
  - Developing instructional materials: Power Point presentations, handouts, discussion items, practice test questions and review games
  - Acquiring study resources: books, flashcards and certification test outline
  - Fostering a safe learning environment via sensitivity to potential participant stressors
  - Analyzing evaluation data
  - Disseminating findings

- Topics included in the review course were:
  - Navigating certification websites
  - Identifying testable material
  - Cultivating study skills
  - Deciphering test questions
  - Identifying perceived barriers to studying/learning
  - Addressing known areas of weakness
  - Decreasing test anxiety
  - Taking tests and study tips

- Participants’ knowledge was assessed by administering a 10-question pretest/posttest covering certification test content.
- The CNS led medical-surgical certification preparation course was evaluated by administering a Certification Preparation Course Survey consisting of a pre- (12 item) and post-survey (16 item).

RESULTS

- Posttest results were 84%.
- Results indicate a CNS-led medical-surgical certification preparation course was an effective strategy to increase knowledge about medical-surgical content.

- For the survey item, “I plan to take the medical-surgical certification exam” results were yes (n=5) and maybe (n=1).
- Perceived degree of anxiety when taking a test was measured using a 4-point Likert Scale (higher scores equating more anxiety).
- Mean perceived anxiety scores were pre- (3) and post-survey (1.7).

- All participants reported: learning additional content; content presented was valuable; presenters and teaching methods were effective; practice questions were beneficial; personal goals were attained; course expectations were met; the environment was conducive for learning.

INTERPRETATION

- Results indicate a CNS-led medical-surgical certification preparation course was an effective strategy to increase knowledge about medical-surgical content.

- CNSs should plan to conduct additional on-site medical-surgical certification preparation courses.

IMPLICATIONS

- Future evaluation should include the number of participants who obtained certification within one year of taking the medical-surgical certification preparation course.
- CNSs should recruit more nurses to participate in future medical-surgical certification preparation courses.
- Future medical-surgical certification preparation courses should include more content questions.

REFERENCES

- Table 1: Certification Preparation Course Survey Results

OUTCOME

- The medical-surgical certification preparation course included five sessions (1.5 hours each) over a six-week period (n=6 nurses).
- Pretest results were 38%.
- Posttest results were 84%.
- The Certification Preparation Preparation Course Survey results were positive (See Table 1).

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