Nursing Graduates on Quality of Education and Readiness for Clinical Practice

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Introduction

There is an increasing use of online learning being utilized for nursing education. The use of accelerated second-degree Bachelor of Science in nursing (ASDBSN) programs have increased rapidly as well. There are currently three identified online pre-licensure ASDBSN programs.

The perception of graduates from online accelerated nursing programs is important to the future of nursing students’ practice and the quality of nursing programs. The online format is one avenue that provides universities with the opportunity to offer more options for students interested in nursing, as well as produce prepared nurses in a shorter time frame.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of recent graduates from online, accelerated, pre-licensure second degree Bachelor of Science in nursing (ASDBSN) programs with regard to the quality of their educational experience and their feelings of readiness for clinical practice.

Methodology

Design: Qualitative descriptive design was implemented to collect data through individual interviews.

Recruitment and Sample: Participants were recruited via email through the alumni offices of the two participating universities. The study used a purposive sample, consisting of eleven recent graduates, all practicing Registered Nurses, from two online, twelve month, accelerated second-degree bachelor of science in nursing (ASDBSN) programs.

Data Collection: Semi-structured, individual interviews were video and audio recorded using Virtual Care Works (VCW), a HIPPA secure online network.

Data Analysis: Data were analyzed by the author using the inductive approach to content analysis.

Findings

Program Quality:

The study found that all participants felt they received a quality education and felt they graduated from quality programs. A major point made throughout the interviews was that this was a fast-paced twelve month program. The online accelerated programs emphasize the clinical aspect of learning, which includes one-on-one preceptorships, so students felt they were able to apply new knowledge almost immediately. This aids in bridging the typical theory-practice gap felt by graduates when transitioning to the registered nurse role.

The study indicated that the participants felt they received a quality education.

Readiness for Clinical Practice:

The recent graduates of online ASDBSN programs expressed confidence and verbalized being well prepared for clinical practice, which is different from what is reported in the literature for graduates of the typical traditional nursing programs.

The results of this study indicated how all of those aspects came together as described by the participants. The graduates described feeling prepared to practice as registered nurses when they began to work. Every one of the participants stated that they felt prepared to practice clinically.

Conclusions

The results indicate that online ASDBSN programs can provide a meaningful, quality route for educating future nurses. Perceptions of program graduates can contribute much needed information to aid in student preparation for a nursing career. The data from this study provides knowledge helpful for developing strategies to prepare graduates for practice that will also apply to traditional nursing program formats. In addition, this qualitative research supplies much needed background information useful for future studies with online ASDBSN graduates. This study supports the use of online education in nursing and demonstrates satisfaction and success that many students experience.

Implications

One implication for nursing practice is that nurses prepared for practice through the use of one-on-one preceptors typically feel clinically prepared to practice at the bedside, as was demonstrated in this study. Nursing students need to have more time and hands on experience with patients, families, staff, and physicians to increase their comfort level, develop their nurse thinking, and to gain skill and understanding of nursing.