

Promoting leadership in senior nursing students: Implementing a quality improvement and evidence-based practice project to address common clinical problems



Kristy Chunta, PhD, RN, ACNS, BC Michele Gerwick PhD, RN, & Benjamin Martin, MS, RN
Department of Nursing and Allied Health Professions, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Introduction

- The American Association of Colleges of Nursing's (AACN) Baccalaureate Essentials (2009) recognize need for nursing students to develop leadership skills to promote quality care.
- Quality management focuses on identifying potential health care problems and improving care and quality (Sullivan, 2013). These include opportunities to assist or begin basic quality improvement (QI) initiatives.
- Student nurses also need learning experiences to prepare them to address safety and quality concerns.
- These opportunities may be limited in the clinical setting. Students need other creative methods to understand the process of quality and safety in the clinical setting.

Nursing Management Course

- NURS 440 Nursing Management Clinical
- 31 students worked in pairs or groups of 3 to complete the project
- QI topics included:
- Hand-washing
 - Medication administration
 - High risk for falls
 - Isolation policies

Best Practice Recommendations

- Students suggested the following recommendations:
- Proper signage on the doors and in bathrooms to remind staff to wash hands; clearly identify isolation rooms with signs
 - Place sinks in areas where handwashing is conducive
 - Assign a daily champion on the unit to discuss QI initiatives in huddles and monitor compliance
 - Review policies and working with frontline staff to facilitate workflow and compliance
 - Wear an identifying garment when administering medications to prevent interruptions
 - Provide unit education intermittently and share unit observations in huddles
 - Charge RN to share compliance reports daily

Learning Activity

The aim of the learning activity included the following:

- 1) Provide an opportunity for students to address a quality improvement issue in a nursing management/leadership clinical course.
- 2) Allow senior students to build on research skills from the junior level by using evidence-based practice guidelines (EBP) related to the QI topic.
- 3) Assist students to understand QI by reviewing policies and collecting data on the clinical unit.
- 4) Promote professional role by having students create a poster of the QI/EBP project.

Findings from Students' QI Reviews

- Staff did not wash their hands entering or leaving the patient's room. Hand sanitizer not used on a consistent basis. Sinks not in areas conducive to hand washing in one unit.
- Majority of RNs followed medication administration policies. Did not consistently ask the patient's name and DOB. RNs frequently interrupted during medication administration.
- Many staff did not follow isolations precautions (even Clostridium Difficile)
- Protocol for high-risk for falls not consistently implemented. Difficult to identify these patients on the units, i.e. no magnet on the door frame, no yellow socks.
- All policies/protocols readily available to staff.

Lessons Learned

- Learning activity provided hands-on experience related to QI practices and the use of EBP research
- Students were able to access hospital policies to review recommended practices
- Students did experience some "down time" throughout the day while completing the experience
- Future recommendations include:
 - continuing the learning activity during the leadership/management course
 - providing students with more structured guidelines related to the clinical day
 - partner with clinical agencies to have students share their poster presentations with hospital staff