Undergraduate Nursing Students and Faculty Perceptions of a Research Internship Model: A Transformational Learning Approach

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Disclosure

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Learning Objectives

1. Describe at least two components to include when developing a research internship program for undergraduate nursing students
2. Discuss at least one finding based on the study results
3. Identify at least two important reasons for implementing an undergraduate nursing research internship program
Background

- Engaging baccalaureate nursing students in the research process can be challenging:
  - Visibility of research
  - Lack of access to research
  - Negative student perceptions

(Spiers, Paul, Jennings, & Weaver, 2012)
Background (continued)

• Concern that an insufficient number of students will enroll in PhD nursing programs
• In the future, there may be a lack of PhD-prepared faculty

(Oermann, Lynn, & Agger, 2016)
Purpose

• The purpose of this educational project was to evaluate a research internship program within an existing evidence-based practice course.
Aims

1. Describe a model for exposing baccalaureate nursing students to the role of the nurse-scientist
2. Assess student perceptions of the research internship learning experience
3. Assess faculty perceptions of the internship
Research Internship Model

- Offered to baccalaureate nursing students after their first year of course work
- The model was embedded in an existing undergraduate three-credit research evidence-based practice course
- Designed as an alternative to the traditional literature review group poster project
- Students were paired with faculty who have active programs of research
Procedure

• Information about the research internship option was presented to students at the end of the preceding term:
  • Purpose and requirements
  • Descriptions of the participating faculty mentors’ current research
  • Descriptions of the types of research activities
  • Due date request for students interested in participating
  • Each student’s first 3 choices for a research mentor
Student Requirements

- Completion of CITI training
- Establishment of a learning contract with their mentor
- Twenty hours of side-by-side work in the research field with their mentor
- Participation in two 1-hour group seminar discussions with course faculty regarding their experience
Mentors’ Research Program

- Early stroke treatment in adults
- Medication adherence in kidney transplant recipients
- Mobile technology in kidney transplant recipients
- Long-term outcomes in neurological injury in adults
- Sleep neurobehavioral patterns in school-aged children
Notification

• Both students and mentors received email notifications of matches and were instructed to contact one another and make arrangements to meet and establish each student’s learning contract.
Methods
Study Design

• Cross-sectional descriptive questionnaire was used to assess the educational project
Measures

• An open-ended, nine-item student perception questionnaire
• An open-ended, seven-item faculty perception questionnaire
• The University IRB approved this educational project
Data Analysis

• Survey responses were analyzed using a content analysis method
Sample

- Forty-eight students were enrolled in the pre-licensure accelerated baccalaureate 10-week evidence-based practice course.
- Out of these 48 students, 13 students volunteered to participate in the internship option.
Results
Response Rate

• 100% response rate (students $n = 13$ and faculty $n = 5$)
Student Common Comments

• **Positive Research Experience**
  
  – “It was amazing being able to be a part of an interdisciplinary team that was learning at the same time I was” and “The team looked at me as a vital part and that was really cool.”

• **Hands-on Learning Aspects**
  
  – “I learned how to properly give an informed consent.”
  
  – “I learned a lot about all of the different areas of research as well as how to use Endnote.”
Student Common Comments (continued)

- **Impact for Becoming a Nurse-Scientist**
  - “The research process was a lot more eye-opening than just reading about research. I learned that nurse-scientists do a lot more than I originally thought.”

- **Challenges**
  - “The only problem was when REDCap would go down; this would limit our time we could go and collect data.”
Faculty Common Comments

• **Positive Aspects of Being a Mentor**
  – “An opportunity to ascertain that the students truly understood the elements of the research process.”

• **Student Contribution**
  – “The students were helpful teaching us how to use the new infusion pumps...loved that.”
  – “The students worked with my research nurses and were able to help them with completing some of their tasks.”

• **Challenges**
  – Down time while waiting for study participants
  – CITI training
  – IRB approval to add students to the research protocol
Results (continued)

• Several students ($n = 10, 77\%$) indicated they would consider a PhD program

• All faculty members ($n = 5, 100\%$) indicated they actively spoke with their students about applying to a PhD program
Discussion

• The findings suggest potential significance for using a research internship model to expose undergraduate nursing students to the role of nurse-scientist early in their career
• Both students and faculty believed the research internship model was a positive experience that helped the students to learn about the role of nurse-scientist
• The positive experiences cited by students predominately reflected insights regarding the conduct of research gained through their active participation in an ongoing research study
Future Research

• Future research is needed to explore how many students actually enroll in a PhD program after participating in an undergraduate nursing research internship program.
Implication for Education

• Providing an ongoing research internship embedded in a required course has the potential to increase the number of students enrolling in PhD nursing programs
References


Thank You
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