

Implementation of a clinical learning assignment to provide delegation opportunities to senior nursing students

Kristy S. Chunta, PhD, RN, ACNS, BC; Riah L. Hoffman, PhD, RN; Nicole Custer, PhD, RN, CCRN-K
Department of Nursing and Allied Health Professions, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Introduction

Baccalaureate generalist nurses are designers, coordinators, and managers of care. Delegation principles should be taught and practiced throughout the nursing education program to prepare students to design and manage care.

Providing care to a group of patients requires the student to develop effective leadership skills and to make appropriate decisions to prioritize and delegate care.

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing recently published new national guidelines on nursing delegation. These guidelines recognize the need for delegation in today's health care setting and the challenges of this complex process.

Clinical opportunities should focus on developing and refining the knowledge and skills necessary to manage care as part of an interprofessional team including effective delegation.

Providing delegation learning experiences can be difficult for nurse educators due to limitations in the clinical setting, large student numbers, and high patient acuity.

Students often feel uncomfortable when attempting to delegate clinical activities to unlicensed professionals, resulting in limited opportunities to learn the delegation process.

Learning Activity

Senior students enrolled in a leadership/management clinical course were provided multiple patient assignments of 3-4 patients.

When providing care the students had the opportunity to delegate care to a peer student who was assigned as the delegate for the day.

The delegate's role was to function in an unlicensed assistive personnel (UAP) capacity and completed assigned delegated tasks from student peers.

This allowed students to manage a multiple patient load and delegate care in a realistic manner.

The learning activity provided opportunities for students to identify appropriate activities to delegate, communicate effectively, and make decisions related to delegation based on prioritization and time management needs.

Student Journal Themes

Students were asked to complete a journal reflection about the delegation experience and address the following:

1. struggles related to delegating care activities,
2. whether students felt they delegated appropriately,
3. missed delegation opportunities,
4. what was learned from the experience and how it could be applied to future clinical situations.

Student perceptions of delegating to a classmate

- Reluctant to delegate tasks that students could complete themselves.
- Students perceived that it was faster to perform a task on their own rather than to delegate the task.
- Students frequently reported not delegating because they wanted to make sure tasks were done correctly.

Delegating appropriately

Students delegated tasks such as vital signs, I&O, blood glucose monitoring, and ADL's in order to focus on RN duties such as performing assessments and administering medications.

Missed delegation activities

Students did identify challenges with remembering to delegate activities.

What was learned and how it could be applied to future clinical situations

Delegating to a classmate engaged students in effective communication and time management during the delegation process, which allowed students to recognize the importance of delegation in providing safe patient care.

Students identified that they were more comfortable delegating to a fellow student than to a staff member.

Challenges & Future Learning Activities

Faculty identified the following limitations/challenges related to the learning experience.

- Students struggled with the fifth right of delegation, which includes monitoring performance, evaluating performance, and intervening.
- On many occasions, students failed to follow up with the delegate to assure the task was completed properly.
- Students that functioned in the delegate role often failed to report the delegated task was completed.
- When observing students struggling with time management, faculty had to prompt them on occasion to delegate tasks.
- Students were more comfortable delegating to a fellow student than attempting to delegate to another staff member.
- Sometimes the assignment allowed for student "downtime" when students were waiting to receive delegation tasks.

Future assignments could include

- Incorporate a delegation check list for students to use when delegating tasks.
- Develop simulation scenarios that provide specific opportunities for student delegation.

Conclusion

Senior students need opportunities to implement delegation activities in the clinical setting.

Students feel more comfortable delegating to peer nursing students instead of UAP.

The learning activity allowed students to prioritize care and focus on time management and delegation skills when providing care to a group of patients.

References

- American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2008). *The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice*. Washington D.C.: Author.
- National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2016). *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, 7(1), 5-12.
- Nowell, L. S. (2016). Delegate, collaborate, or consult? A capstone simulation for senior nursing students. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 37(1), 54-55.