

# Student Perceptions Regarding Collaborative Intraprofessional Nursing Education

Tracy P. George, DNP, APRN-BC, CNE,<sup>1</sup> Claire DeCristofaro, MD,<sup>2</sup> Pamela F. Murphy, PhD<sup>3</sup>, Julia M. Hucks, MSN, APRN-BC, CNE<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,4</sup> School of Health Sciences, Department of Nursing, Francis Marion University

<sup>2,3</sup> Department of Behavioral Sciences, College of Health, Human Services, and Science, Ashford University

Presented at the Nursing Education Research Conference, Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing/ National League for Nursing  
Washington, DC (April 19-21, 2018)

## Introduction

- **Purpose:** To determine student perceptions regarding collaborative learning activities between undergraduate and graduate nursing students.
- **Peer-assisted Learning (PAL):** Peer-assisted learning (PAL) is an intraprofessional, active-learning approach in which higher-level students act as teachers to lower-level students (Williams & Reddy, 2016).
- **Near-peer teaching:** Near-peer teaching is a subset of PAL, in which the peer teachers are at least one year more advanced than the learners (Aba Alkhail, 2015).
- **Benefits:** There are positive benefits of near-peer teaching for both levels of students.
  1. For lower-level students, these benefits include identification with the near-peer teachers, increased understanding of course requirements, decreased anxiety about clinical expectations, learning how to manage difficult situations, and gaining role models through their involvement with the near-peer teachers (McKenna & Williams, 2017; Nelson et al., 2013).
  2. The upper-level near-peer teachers reported improvements in their teaching skills, knowledge, and clinical skills through the experience, while the lower-level students received helpful feedback on clinical skills in a supportive learning environment. (Khaw & Raw, 2016; deMenezes & Premnath, 2016).
- **Literature:** There is a lack of published research focusing on collaboration between undergraduate and graduate nursing students.
  1. In one study, second-year nursing students were utilized for the health assessment head-to-toe physical examinations by first-semester students, with positive feedback received for both groups of students (Bryant, 2017).
  2. In the simulation laboratory, senior level students have been used successfully as facilitators for junior level students (Dumas, Hollerbach, Stuart, & Duffy, 2015).



## Background & Methods

- **Planned Collaboration:** The community assessments of the undergraduate BSN students in the Population-Focused Nursing and Healthcare Policy course were utilized by the online graduate MSN students in the Patient Education and Advocacy course to create low-literacy pamphlets. Because the graduate MSN course was online, there was no in-person collaboration between the groups of students.
- **Patient Education Materials:** The MSN students created low-literacy pamphlets designed to meet the needs of the specific populations served by six community health care agencies, including free clinics, community health centers, and a public school. These sites were in five rural southeastern counties in underserved medical areas.
- **Teaching Sessions:** These pamphlets were utilized during teaching sessions by undergraduate nursing students at the community agencies.
- **Surveys:** Both before and after the project, survey data was obtained from the undergraduate and graduate nursing students to assess their perceptions about intraprofessional collaborative educational activities.
- **IRB approval:** Obtained from Francis Marion University.
- **Demographics:**
  1. Pre-surveys: 34 BSN students & 19 MSN students; 35 were White/Caucasian & 15 were African-American, & 3 chose "Other" as race.
  2. Post-surveys: 21 BSN students & 18 MSN students; 25 were White/Caucasian, 10 were African-American, 4 chose "Other" as race.
  3. All students were under age 35.

## Results: Qualitative Themes

1. **Barriers to collaboration:** Unable to meet in person; different schedules; time constraints; separation between programs.
2. **Instructional preparation:** Ambiguous directions; both groups of students have similar nursing backgrounds; create assignments that allow students to work together; different levels of knowledge.
3. **Importance of intraprofessional relationships:** Mentoring & working side-by-side with other levels of students is important; value of teamwork and collaboration.
4. **Role in improved patient care:** Collaboration is vital to improving patient outcomes and building morale among employees; teamwork is beneficial to patient care.
5. **Patient education:** Need to tailor patient education to different learning levels; avoid use of medical terminology.
6. **Perception of collaboration:** A face-to-face project would promote better collaboration.
7. **Awareness of health literacy:** Importance of providing education that is relevant to the population you are teaching.
8. **Facilitators of collaboration:** Communication; feedback; internet; common project; clarity on which portions are being completed by each group of students.

## Conclusions

- An intraprofessional collaboration between campus-based prelicensure nursing students and online graduate nursing students provided an opportunity for service learning.
- The community agencies were appreciative of the pamphlets created by the students. Several agencies have since utilized them in clinics.
- This project met the student learning outcomes for two courses at two different program levels.
- Students reported a greater understanding of the implications of low health literacy after this project.
- Students have suggested that future projects should involve in-person collaboration, while still being sensitive to the time constraints of the different levels of students.
- Students voiced an interest in mentoring and working together on community-based projects.
- Instructors need to clarify assignments when creating intraprofessional projects.
- There is a need for additional research on intraprofessional collaboration in nursing.

## Contact

Tracy P. George, DNP, APRN-BC, CNE Email: [tgeorge@fmarion.edu](mailto:tgeorge@fmarion.edu)

## Selected References

- Aba Alkhail, B. (2015). Near-peer-assisted learning (NPAL) in undergraduate medical students and their perception of having medical interns as their near peer teacher. *Medical Teacher*, 37(sup1), S33-S39.
- Bryant, S. G. (2017). Keeping it in the program: Second year nursing students as stand-in patients for first year head-to-toe assessment check-offs. *Nurse Educator*, 42(2), 60-61.
- de Menezes, S., & Premnath, D. (2016). Near-peer education: A novel teaching program. *International Journal Of Medical Education*, 7,160-167. doi:10.5116/ijme.5738.3c28
- Dumas, B. P., Hollerbach, A. D., Stuart, G. W., & Duffy, N. D. (2015). Expanding simulation capacity: Senior-level students as teachers. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 54(9), 516-519.
- Khaw, C., & Raw, L. (2016). The outcomes and acceptability of near-peer teaching among medical students in clinical skills. *International Journal Of Medical Education*, 7,188-194. doi:10.5116/ijme.5749.7b8b
- McKenna, L., & Williams, B. (2017). The hidden curriculum in near-peer learning: An exploratory qualitative study. *Nurse Education Today*, 5077-81. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2016.12.010
- Nelson, A. J., Nelson, S. V., Linn, A. J., Raw, L. E., Kildea, H. B., & Tonkin, A. L. (2013). Tomorrow's educators ... today? Implementing near-peer teaching for medical students. *Medical Teacher*, 35(2), 156-159. doi:10.3109/0142159X.2012.737961
- Williams, B., & Reddy, P. (2016). Does peer-assisted learning improve academic performance? A scoping review. *Nurse Education Today*, 4223-29. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2016.03.024