A Classroom Activity to Enable Nursing Students to Develop Clinical Reasoning Skills

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Background
One of the challenges in nursing education is the need to enable students to internalize the skills needed to implement the thought processes of critical thinking and clinical reasoning. The research of Patricia Benner has been instrumental in explaining the need to improve the critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills of newly licensed registered nurses.

Research Question
The research questions for this study were: What was the difference in the change in the ATI critical thinking scores for students who experienced the Clinical Reasoning Teaching Method and students who did not experience the Clinical Reasoning Teaching Method? What was the change in the ATI scores for critical thinking before and after the CRTM on the group that received the activity? What was the change in the ATI scores for those that did and did not have the Clinical Reasoning Teaching Method?

Methods
The method used for this study was a quantitative study using an ex post facto design. The intervention was the independent variable (CRTM). The study utilized a convenience sample of students from two cohorts who had recently completed an ADN program. The ex post facto design was most appropriate because the purpose was to determine the effectiveness of an intervention that had already been initiated. The ATI critical thinking examination was appropriate because it evaluated the areas of self-regulation, inference, analysis, evaluation, and interpretation. These areas are important for both critical thinking and clinical reasoning.

Findings

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Based on these results related to the Cohort that did not use the CRTM has a p value of 0.823 therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. This cohort did not have a significant change in score. The results related to the Cohort that did use the CRTM has a p value of 0.005 therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This cohort had a significant change in score. This change is score was positive.

CRTM Process
1. Divide the students into four groups
2. Give each group on category of cards
3. Allow the groups five minutes to review the SBAR report
4. Allow five minutes for the groups to select the best responses and write them on the sheet
5. After this rotate the category cards to another group and allow five minutes to decide on the best answers for their current category
6. Continue this process until all groups have had each category of cards
7. Combine two groups into one group and the other two into one
8. These larger groups will have ten minutes to debate and provide rationales for the answers that were chosen in the smaller groups and come to a consensus on the answers to be placed on the larger groups form
9. The two larger groups compare the results of the exercise and provide rationales for their choices
10. The instructor guides and facilitates the discussion. This process allows the students to see how their decisions change or modify when he or she has more information. The process also allows the student to see that there may be more than one way to approach situations and still be correct.

Recommendations
The results of this research indicate that the CRTM is effective in allowing students to develop the skills needed for clinical reasoning at the institution where the research was conducted. Other educational institutions may consider implementing the CRTM with their nursing students. The literature review indicated that a large gap in research exists related to clinical reasoning, educational methods to teach clinical reasoning, and research at the Associate degree level. Further research on the CRTM could help fill this gap. It is recommended that further research be conducted on the CRTM in different settings to see if the results are similar. It is also recommended that the changes in the results of the individual skills evaluated be researched to determine if one particular skill changes to a greater degree than others.