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Examining Readmission Policies: Academic Performance After Readmission to Nursing School

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Background. Nursing students must perform at a level which meets established minimum competencies. Unfortunately, every school has students who do not meet performance expectations or find themselves unable to continue schooling for personal reasons, making them subject to readmission policies. Many schools have strict readmission policies for students who have either failed or withdrawn from the program with the most common response being to suspend or dismiss the student. This attrition is costly to the student and program for multiple reasons. There is little evidence regarding academic performance of students readmitted following a one-time program dismissal. The purpose of this study was to investigate factors influencing program completion in nursing students readmitted to an associate degree nursing program.

Method. Data was collected using an archival design from the existing records of all students readmitted after dismissal, defined as leaving the nursing program at any time before completion, between fall 2009 and fall 2015. Students were tracked until either dismissed a second time or successful, defined as program completion. Variables of interest include GPA when dismissed; GPA upon readmission to the program; reason for dismissal- personal or academic, number of semesters completed before the first dismissal, number of semesters out; midcurricular and exit HESI scores, and NCLEX-RN examination scores for those who completed. Other variables of interest included the numbers of clinical failures, medication math failures, skills test failures, as well as attendance and conduct reports before the second dismissal.

Results. Of the 107 students for whom complete records were available, 46 were dismissed a second time and 61 completed the program. The semester a student was initially dismissed and reason for dismissal was significantly related to academic performance upon return. No student readmitted after being dismissed the first semester for academic reasons in either nursing or chemistry completed the program ($X^2 37.492$ (7), $p < 0.001$), while every student readmitted for the final semester or readmitted after withdrawing for personal reasons completed the program. As students progressed through the second and third semesters, the percent of students completing the program increased, though the percent completing after return in the third semester was just over 50% (53.2%). Those who completed the program had significantly higher GPAs on readmission ($t = 2.023$, $p = .05$). Those students having to take coursework to raise more than 2 semesters of coursework to raise their GPA to meet readmission requirements had only a 10% chance of completing the program ($X^2 21.080$ (4), $p < 0.001$), while those who were initially dismissed for conduct had a 12.1% chance of completing the program ($X^2 10.461$, $p = 0.01$). Students not completing the program had significantly more absences ($M = .5$, $SD = 1.1$) than those who completed ($M = .18$, $SD = .5$; $t = 2.027$, $p = .045$) and skills test failures, with those not completing the program having more failures ($M = .41$, $SD = 1.1$) than those who completed ($M = .03$, $SD = .18$; $t = 2.641$, $p = .01$). There was a significant difference between the type of student and program completion, with advanced standing students being more likely to complete ($X^2 4.075$, $p = .044$). There were no differences in program completion rates by gender. There was no significant difference in program completion rates for those students ($n = 21$) who failed multiple courses in any one semester ($X^2 .228$, $p = .63$). A 2-factor logistic regression model consisting of GPA upon reentry and initial semester dismissed was statistically significant ($X^2 100.5$ (60), $p = 0.001$), explaining 81.8% of the variance in program completion rates, correctly classified 88.8% of the students.

Discussion. This study revealed major implications to consider when evaluating readmission of policies. The fact that no student readmitted after academic dismissal the first semester did not complete the program was not surprising. Though program entrance criteria screen for academic ability, it may be that the student who is not successful this early in their schooling is not prepared or able to meet the academic demands of nursing school. The low completion rate for those students with a lower readmission GPA or who took additional coursework to raise their GPA is congruent with reports regarding the predictive value of GPA in the general college and nursing student populations. Implementing policies that lower the maximum time allowed for program completion would make it more difficult for students with low GPAs to be readmitted and reduce student's financial burden associated with continuing to take additional coursework towards a degree which will likely not be realized.

Conclusion. The results of this study provide faculty and administrators with data that can be used to evaluate and develop readmission policies based on clearly defined criteria which measure a student's ability to succeed, as well as develop and implement appropriate remediation programs, such as tutoring or mentoring, designed to provide students with resources to support retention and improve the completion rate of readmitted students. This analysis strongly supports the need for careful consideration regarding the timing of dismissal and the student's GPA and conduct, when considering the readmission of students and their chance for successfully completing the nursing program.

Title:

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References:

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Abstract Summary:

The presenters will describe factors related to academic performance of students readmitted after dismissal and evaluate factors predicting program completion rates in relation to readmission policies. Attendees will be able to use the information to assist in refining readmission policies.

Content Outline:

I. Introduction

- A. Discuss expectations for student performance in nursing school
- B. Review reasons students may not be prepared to meet the rigors of nursing school
- C. Emphasize how attrition within nursing programs is problematic for students and to the program for multiple reasons

- a. Contributes to the nursing shortage by reducing the number of new graduates available
- b. Reduces tuition revenue for the program and in-effectively uses financial aid resources

II. Body

- A. Current readmission policies are often strict, dismissing students after one episode of dismissal or failure

- a. Little evidence is available that addresses the success of nursing students who have been readmitted following academic dismissal

- b. Studies have addressed factors predicting success for initial entry and for likelihood of program completion

- c. Since it is plausible that generalizations about entry-level predictors of success do not apply to students after dismissal for unsatisfactory academic performance or who withdraw for personal reasons, this study was undertaken to evaluate factors influencing program completion in nursing students readmitted to an ADN program

B. Methods

- a. Data was collected using an archival design from the existing records of all students readmitted after dismissal, defined as leaving the nursing program at any time before completion, between fall 2009 and fall 2015

- b. Students were tracked until either dismissed a second time or successful, defined as program completion

- c. Variables of interest include GPA when dismissed; GPA upon readmission to the program; reason for dismissal- personal or academic, number of semesters completed before the first dismissal, number of semesters out; midcurricular and exit HESI scores, and NCLEX-RN examination scores for those who completed.

- d. Other variables of interest included the numbers of clinical failures, medication math failures, skills test failures, as well as attendance and conduct reports before the second dismissal

C. Results

- a. Of the 107 students for whom full records were available, 46 (43%) were dismissed a second time and 61 (57%) completed the program

- b. Several factors influenced program completion

- i. Reason for dismissal, whether academic or person

- ii. Semester initially dismissed

- 1. No student readmitted after being dismissed the first semester for academic reasons in either fundamentals nursing course or chemistry completed the program

- 2. Every student readmitted to the final semester medical-surgical course completed the program

- 3. No significant difference in program completion for students with multiple failed courses in one semester

iii. GPA and MC-HESI

1. Students who completed had higher GPAs on readmission ($t = 2.023$, $p = .05$)
2. Those who took course work for 3 or more semesters to raise their GPA to meet readmission standards had only a 10% chance of program completion

iv. Other variables of interest

1. Those who were initially dismissed for conduct had a 12.1% chance of completing the program ($X^2 10.461$, $p = 0.01$)
2. Students not completing the program had significantly more absences ($M = .5$, $SD = 1.1$) than those who completed ($M = .18$, $SD = .5$; $t = 2.027$, $p = .045$) and skills test failures, with those not completing the program having more failures ($M = .41$, $SD = 1.1$) than those who completed ($M = .03$, $SD = .18$; $t = 2.641$, $p = .01$)

3. Advanced standing students being more likely to complete ($X^2 4.075$, $p = .044$)

v. Simple two-factor logistic regression model consisting of GPA on readmission and semester initially dismissed was statistically significant, explaining 81.8% of the variance in program completion rates and correctly classified 88.8% of students

c. NCLEX-RN influence

- i. 61 completed 47 (77%) first time passed while 13 (21%) did not pass
- ii. Advanced students who completed all passed first time; after removing these students from sample, traditional students dropped to a 71.7% chance of passing NCLEX-RN first time

D. Discussion

- a. This study revealed major implications to consider when evaluating readmission of policies
- b. The fact that no student readmitted after academic dismissal the first semester did not complete the program was not surprising.
 - i. Though program entrance criteria screen for academic ability, it may be that the student who is not successful this early in their schooling is not prepared or able to meet the academic demands of nursing school
 - ii. The poor performance in the skills laboratory, failing skills evaluations or medication math tests, reflect a lack of the necessary knowledge and skills necessary for safe practice, akin to the performance standards in the classroom setting
 - iii. The low completion rate for those students with a lower readmission GPA or who took additional coursework to raise their GPA is congruent with reports regarding the predictive value of GPA in the general college and nursing student populations
 - iv. Implementing policies that lower the maximum time allowed for program completion would make it more difficult for students with low GPAs to be readmitted and reduce student's financial burden associated with continuing to take additional coursework towards a degree which will likely not be realized
- c. Administrators and faculty will want to consider how to implement strategies to assist any readmitted students who do complete the program since in this instance, pass rates are below acceptable standards

III. Conclusion

- A. The results of this study provide faculty and administrators with data that can be used to evaluate and develop readmission policies based on clearly defined criteria which measure a student's ability to succeed, as well as develop and implement appropriate remediation programs, such as tutoring or mentoring, designed to provide students with resources to support retention and improve the completion rate of readmitted students
- B. This analysis strongly supports the need for careful consideration regarding the timing of dismissal and the student's GPA and conduct, when considering the readmission of students and their chance for successfully completing the nursing program
- C. For those students facing readmission, the results can be used as a guide in counseling discussions with administrators and advisors, whose purpose is to help students achieve personal and academic goals

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Professional Experience: Dr. Harding holds a doctoral degree from West Virginia University and a post-master's certificate in nursing education from Kent State University. She has been at Kent State University Tuscarawas since 2005. As an Associate Professor, part of her responsibilities includes providing instruction for first year associate degree nursing students and RN-BSN students. At the administrative level, she supervises junior faculty and is involved with the oversight of various University programs and committees, including the admission and curriculum committees. Outside of Kent State University, Dr. Harding is a co-author of "Critical Thinking Cases in Nursing" and editor of "Medical-Surgical Nursing: Assessment and Management of Clinical Problems". She has published several articles and delivered multiple presentations related to student success and teaching pedagogy and is involved with test item and lesson plan development.

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Professional Experience: Ms. Stefka graduated from Walden University with a MSN focusing in nursing education. She has been a full-time Lecturer faculty in School of Nursing at Kent State University Tuscarawas since 2013. As such, she is responsible for clinical, laboratory, and classroom instructor for first year associate degree nursing students. Prior to this position, Ms. Stefka was an adjunct clinical instructor for Kent State University Tuscarawas and taught NCLEX review courses for Kaplan University. She is an engaged member of the University community, including service on admission and curriculum committees. Outside of Kent State University, she is involved with test item writing and lesson plan development.

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