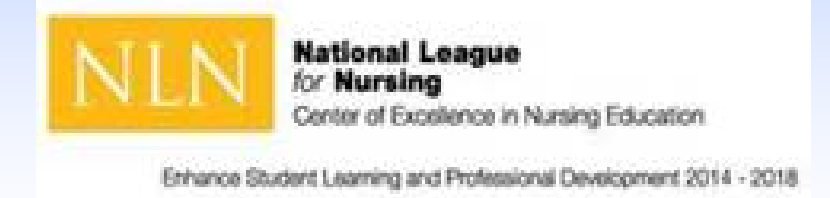


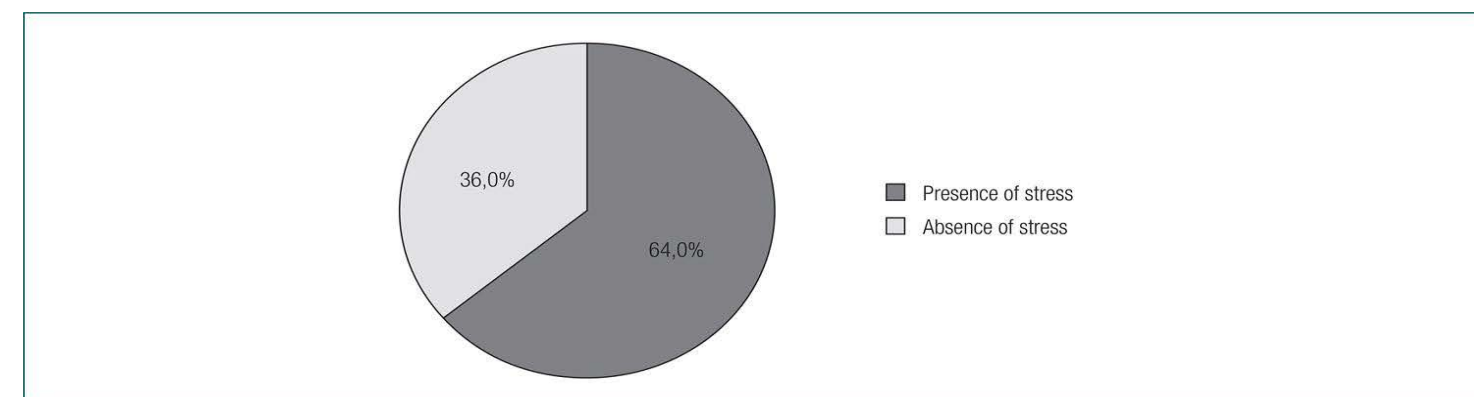
A Multi-Modal Approach to Address Test Anxiety in Students in an Accelerated Nursing Program

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Introduction

Extensive research has been conducted over the years on the prevalence of burnout in nurses due to the increasing demands of the profession. Burnout can be identified as early as when individuals are in nursing school related to the rigorous and complex nature of the curriculum and the expectations placed on nursing student both in the classroom and in the clinical setting. Test anxiety is shown to negatively impact the student's academic performance and has become one of the most debilitating stressors in nursing students. It is even more prevalent among the students in the accelerated programs. More than 60% of nursing students in an accelerated program report extreme stress throughout their education.



Distribution of presence/absence of stress among the nursing students participating in this study
Retrieved from http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0103-21002017000200190&lng=en&nrm=iso&ing=en

Background:

This project relates to the significant increase in test anxiety and poor academic performance among nursing students in the accelerated AAS and BSN programs. The high-stakes nature of nursing studies in addition to personal stressors that are experienced by the nursing students often lead to increased levels of test-anxiety. The undergraduate nursing students are traditionally held to higher standards than the students in other majors. Similar to other nursing programs, at PSN, the students are required to earn a minimum passing grade of C+ in all nursing courses in order to progress to the next semester. At PSN, the failure of two courses during the program (nursing and/or liberal arts/sciences) will result in academic dismissal. Issues with mental health such as depression and anxiety that are playing a significant role in developing test-anxiety were noted during the development of a crisis management program. As a result, the faculty has collaborated in the investigation of the prospect of developing and implementing an innovative approach to managing test-anxiety for nursing students in the classroom and clinical setting.

Methods

Purpose:

The aim of this project is to reduce test anxiety, improve scores on nursing exams, and increase NCLEX-RN passing rates with the use of multiple interventions that include aromatherapy, cognitive based therapy, and peer mentoring. The program's overarching goal is to promote academic success and emotional well-being for our nursing students through the identification and reduction of test anxiety.



Methodology:

- IRB approval will be acquired.
- Written informed consent will be obtained.
- Screening for contraindications to essential oils will be provided.
- Aroma therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and peer mentoring will be offered to students as test anxiety lowering interventions.
- Student's participation in all activities will be voluntary.
- Pre and posttest questionnaires will be administered to all the students.
- The CBT will be offered by two faculty members who will be trained by expert consultants.
- Peer-led stress prevention seminars will be offered throughout the semesters.
- Exam grades and the NCLE results will be monitored for improvement.

Results

Needs Assessment:

A needs assessment was performed to identify the psychosocial needs of current and future nursing students. Gaps identified in the assessment included:

- the need for implementing policies on crisis intervention
- addressing the needs of a widely diverse student body
- addressing student interest in onsite counseling, crisis intervention, and accessibility of program services
- faculty training in recognizing, identifying, and intervening with individuals in distress.
- a significant amount of test anxiety.

A great deal of this anxiety can also be attributed to personal stressors and mental health related issues experienced by students.

Results:

- Success of the project will be determined by evaluation of student and staff feedback.
- Specific information on student report of decreased anxiety post interventions, student report of satisfaction with the interventions, student performance on exams, and student overall success in the nursing program and NCLEX pass-rates will be collected.
- Depending on periodic evaluation results, the project will be amended; and if the program is successful, the school will continue the program.

Conclusions

The proposed program responds to challenges in the teaching and learning environment that are inherent in today's nursing classrooms. One of the rising concerns in nursing students that could negatively impact their navigation through a nursing program is the presence of test anxiety. Test anxiety has been shown to negatively impact a student's academic performance and has become one of the most debilitating stressors in nursing students. In spite of these challenges, schools of nursing present great opportunities for the identification, management, and improvement in the prevention of test anxiety in nursing students.

The literature revealed that utilizing strategies such as biofeedback-assisted relaxation alone was not enough to have a significant impact on students' test anxiety. It was discovered, however, that incorporating multiple strategies such as aromatherapy, cognitive based therapy, and/or peer mentoring may help to reduce test-anxiety in nursing students. Additionally, the proposed project supports PSN's mission to improve student learning in higher education by piloting a crisis management program that will promote academic success and emotional well-being for nursing students. The proposed project will enable faculty to develop a policy of interventions that effectively deal with students who experience test-anxiety in the classroom and in the clinical setting. Anticipated benefits include a reduction in test anxiety, improved academic performance, and improved NCLEX pass-rates.

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