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The effect of human patient simulation on the critical thinking skills of nursing students

Statement of the problem: For decades, simulation has been used as a learning tool in a multitude of industries including healthcare. Human patient simulators allow varying levels of fidelity to mimic authentic patient care. The simulated clinical environment supports demonstration of procedures and ongoing construction of critical thinking. In the clinical area, it progressed to clinical reasoning. There is a shortage of clinical placement sites for teaching nursing students. The result is multiple nursing programs have had limits placed on their enrollments or have cancelled expansion plans. The shortage of clinical sites is compounded by the shortage of qualified nursing faculty. Clinical sites have decreased numbers of students permitted in each clinical group, also. Nursing administrators have found an alternative solution using simulation whereby a group of students can participate in patient care in a simulated patient care arena.

Methodology: A quantitative, quasi-experimental, cross sectional, four-group design was designed to examine the impact on using Human Patient Simulations on students' critical thinking skills. A sample of 100 students was enrolled in one of two campuses of the same program in the U.S. using the same curriculum. One program had 25% of their clinical hours performed in a simulation lab, whereas, the other campus had the previous traditional clinical hours performed in acute care or long term care settings without simulation. All students completed the California Critical Thinking Skills Test at the beginning and end of their nursing program.

Findings & Conclusion: The results supported previous studies that demonstrated a correlation between six variables and improved critical thinking scores when simulation was integrated into a curriculum rather than using clinical sites alone for learning care of patients. The clinical education experience to gain critical thinking skills and move toward clinical reasoning was enhanced through the use of human patient simulators in a nursing lab experience.

Biography

Max Bishop has academic expertise in the education of students using human patient simulation was found to fill the gap in research using licensed practical nursing students. He has a passion for assessing and enhancing critical thinking skills in nursing students. His previous academic endeavors supported the constructivists approach to student learning, but applied these theoretical underpinnings to the simulation environment. His research identified the strengths of having simulation integrated into the curriculum for improved outcomes in patient care based on the construction of critical thinking skills from novice to graduate.

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