



EFFECT OF PRECEPTORSHIP ON CLINICAL COMPETENCIES IN NOVICE NURSING STUDENTS

Nursing

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ABSTRACT

First year nursing students' interface with patients within a few months of enrolment and clinical competency is expected from them right from the beginning, resulting in stress. Preceptorship is a one-on-one clinical education model in which preceptees (novices) learn to work in the practice discipline, under guidance of their preceptors (experts) within a fixed time frame. Hence the investigators conducted a quasi-experimental study on effect of Preceptorship on selected clinical competencies in students of First Year BSc Nursing. Twenty two students of First year BSc Nursing were preceptored for a clinical posting of 2 weeks. The Preceptors were 9 Registered nurses, pursuing post graduate studies in the same college. Majority of students had better Clinical Competencies, with maximal improvements seen in competencies of communication skills and professional conduct. The difference in the mean competency scores before & after Preceptorship is statistically significant $t_{cal} (9.90) > t_{0.01} (2.83)$.

KEYWORDS

Preceptorship, preceptor, preceptee, clinical competencies

INTRODUCTION

It is said that, Nursing is the science of caring for the most vulnerable individuals 'from womb to tomb', and one of the challenges faced by nurse educators is in creating & sustaining efficient, safe & compassionate nurses. Nursing is a practice-based discipline with clinical learning being central to nursing education. Experiential learning during clinical postings provides opportunities for the development of competence and confidence, focusing on students' learning needs. These clinical postings may be stressful as students are expected to demonstrate both competence and confidence in patient care. Faculty do supervise students to help them cope with the clinical learning, but they are not able to be with each student all the time. This in turn leads to decreased interaction between faculty and student, limiting students' opportunities for learning and skill practice, and can provide an inaccurate view of the profession to the novice.

Preceptorship is defined as a period of time two people (experienced nurse with new graduate) work together so that the less experienced person (Preceptee) can learn & apply knowledge & skills in the practice setting, with help of the more experienced person (Preceptor). Preceptorship is an effective strategy, used as a norm to facilitate adaptation of new nurses to a new clinical practice setting/hospital, in developed nations. The investigators decided to apply the principle of preceptored learning for enhancing clinical learning in nursing students.

AIM

Evaluate the effect of Preceptorship on selected Clinical Competencies in Students of First Year BSc Nursing

Objectives

1. Compare Clinical Competency scores of Student nurses before and after Preceptorship
2. Elicit opinions of Student nurses (Preceptees) and Preceptors about the Preceptorship program

Null Hypothesis

H_0 – There will be no difference in Clinical Competencies of Student nurses before and after Preceptorship

Operational Definitions

Preceptorship- A period of time in which two people (a nurse with student nurse or an experienced nurse with a new graduate) work together so that the less experienced person can learn & apply knowledge & skills in the practice setting with the help of the more experienced person. Mosby's Medical Dictionary.

In this study Preceptorship is a program where students of First year BSc Nursing (Preceptees) practise under guidance of First year MSc

Nursing students (Preceptors), in the clinical setting for a period of two weeks.

Selected Clinical Competencies - In this study the selected Clinical Competencies are some of the psychomotor & affective learning outcomes the First year BSc Nursing students are expected to have achieved by end of term and may not have mastered. These competencies include history collection, physical examination and identification of physical & psychological needs of patients, communication skills with patient, healthcare professionals, preceptor and peers, & professional conduct in terms of punctuality, responsibility, initiative, uniform, attitude to Preceptor, etc. & were assessed using a descriptive Likert scale.

METHODOLOGY

An evaluatory, quasi-experimental approach with single group post-test design is used for this study, conducted at PD Hinduja Hospital & MRC, Mumbai. Ethical clearance was obtained & students consent taken verbally. Faculty and preceptors had a full day workshop for training on Preceptorship.

Twenty two students of First year BSc Nursing, willing to participate as Preceptees were preceptored for a clinical posting of 2 weeks at almost the end of term. The Preceptors were 9 Registered nurses pursuing post graduate studies (First year MSc Nursing) in the same college. The preceptors were randomly allotted 2-3 preceptees each. During the preparation period, the preceptors were orientated with their duties in the program, guidelines, learning goals and library resources. The Preceptors underwent a one-day workshop on Preceptorship before the program, after which they were introduced to and interacted with their preceptees.

During the clinical posting the Preceptors assessed the learning needs of preceptees, planned & implemented need-based educational interventions and evaluated their competencies.

The selected Clinical Competencies were assessed using a descriptive Likert scale and Opinions of students about Preceptorship was obtained using an open ended opinionnaire.

RESULTS

The clinical competencies of students was better after they were preceptored. Maximal improvements were seen in their communication skills and professional conduct.

The difference in the mean competency scores before & after Preceptorship is statistically significant $t_{cal} (9.90) > t_{0.01} (2.83)$. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Opinions: Preceptors opined that the workshop prepared them effectively for their role as preceptors and educators. They also expressed that they had better understanding of student learning needs and were able to manage the Student Learning Experiences competently, which is part of curricular requirement in the subject Nursing Education. The Preceptees found the exercise interesting and the Preceptors approachable. They also noted that they had a better understanding of their own strength & weaknesses and felt more skilled and confident.

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

The Preceptorship program was successful in enhancing the selected clinical competencies of Student nurses and it also enabled the Preceptors to refine their clinical teaching & supervision skills. This is in line with a study published by Lafrance T, where the author says that benefits of Preceptorship to novice nurses is an accepted fact but for preceptors not much is known. She has reported findings of her appreciative inquiry about the intrinsic benefits of Preceptorship to preceptors, like reciprocal learning, acknowledgement, affirmation, etc.

The Preceptees found this exercise interesting and were able to identify their own strengths & weaknesses and work on them, and this helped to boost their confidence & skill. Similar findings have been reported by A Heydari et al from Iran, who say that Preceptorship program developed personal, communication, and clinical skills of students. Moreover, the Preceptorship program also improved students' competency and confidence.

The limitations of this study was the single group pretest, posttest design and the brief duration. As the Preceptorship program was executed towards the end of the first year, it was not possible to have a control group. It is recommended that future studies may include a control group and observations be done for a few months.

CONCLUSION

The Preceptorship program was successful in enhancing the selected Clinical Competencies of Student nurses and it also enabled the Preceptors to refine their clinical teaching & supervision skills. Preceptorship may thus be used, not only for graduates transitioning to professional roles, but also to help novices to gain expertise in beginning skills, and even between junior & senior student nurses, for mutual enhancement of competencies & for providing safe, holistic patient care.

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