Supporting Transition to Practice: Preceptor Behaviors that Foster a Positive Preceptorship Experience

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Introduction
Preceptorship is the final clinical preparation that allows pre-licensure nursing students to integrate knowledge and skills obtained during the undergraduate curriculum and apply it to practice with the oversight of a professional nurse preceptor. The preceptor facilitates the students’ integration to the clinical area by assisting in the development of professional knowledge and skills with an individualized approach (Omer, Suliman & Moola, 2015). The preparation of students to provide safe and quality care is dependent upon the type and quality of clinical preceptorship (Edward, Ousey, Playle & Giandinoto, 2017; Reberio, Edward, Chapman & Evans, 2015).

Background
A literature review determined that prior research focuses mainly on the preceptor, including how to set up a successful preceptor/mentoring program for nursing students and ways to ensure the preceptor had a positive experience (Thomas & Edwards, 2018). Few studies focus on the student nurse’s perception of which specific preceptor behaviors enhanced or hindered the preceptorship learning experience.

Purpose
• Explore students’ perceptions of their assigned preceptor during the final clinical course.
• Explore what enhances and hinders student learning during the preceptorship experience.

Method
• Descriptive and exploratory methods
• Sample of senior level pre-licensure BSN students from both an accelerated and traditional program
• At the end of the preceptorship, the pre-licensure students completed a survey
  • 17 questions using a 5-point Likert scale
  • 2 exploratory questions

Results
399 out of 626 students (64%) completed surveys to explore students’ perception of their assigned preceptor during their final clinical course.
Overall means ranged from 4.4-4.7

Descriptive:
13 of 17 question mean average > 4.5. The two highest scoring items were:
• Serves as a professional role model (4.65)
• Demonstrates clinical knowledge & expertise (4.72)

Explorative
• Qualitative analysis completed on four questions: 2 exploratory questions and 2 lowest score items
• Themes – Factors that Enhanced Learning:
  • Increasing independence gradually
  • Pushing out of comfort zone

Discussion
• Being a preceptor can be overwhelming as these nurses are responsible for quality patient care while providing training to students (Dorice 2017, Hankemeir , 2017;McSharry, 2017)
• Preceptors are not focused on providing theoretical perspective of the preceptorship experience (Trede, 2016).

Future Implications
Formal Preparation Meeting
• Enhance communication between preceptors and academic faculty (Lucas,2018; Omansky, 2010)
• Discuss roles and expectations
Development Education
• Appropriate training and socialization into the role may decrease strain (Dorice, 2017)
• Provide scenarios of how to ask questions and give appropriate feedback (Dorice, 2017; Lucas, 2018)