Collaborative Learning in an Undergraduate Nursing Curriculum
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Introduction
This three-phase action research study evaluated learning outcomes and student perceptions of collaborative learning in an undergraduate nursing course using a different method of curricular delivery in each phase:
• traditional lecture
• collaborative learning groups
• collaborative learning groups with a wiki
Collaborative learning occurs when students work interdependently in groups to achieve shared learning goals. The benefits of collaborative learning include content mastery, development of critical thinking and problem solving skills, and improved interpersonal skills; essential to interprofessional team work.

Purpose
Learning outcomes studied the students’ ability to: 1) synthesize knowledge from nursing and other health disciplines in using evidence based practice to manage health care of diverse clients, 2) demonstrate critical thinking skills in reasoning, analysis, research or decision-making relevant to the discipline of nursing.

Participant sample
Nursing students were enrolled in an equivocal course, of either the traditional (4-year; n=193) or accelerated (12-month; n=153) baccalaureate program.

Study Methods
Investigators examined the data sources at each phase, employed self-reflection of the participants to inform purposeful changes as the teaching-learning process proceeded at each phase.
• Traditional lectures in phase one were replaced with collaborative learning teams in phase two. Based on student feedback, two major changes were implemented during phase three.
• Instructors created a web-based wiki feature in the course learning system.
• Students completed assigned case activity outside the class, placed the information on the wiki and presented the information to their peers in class.
• Student perceptions were assessed at the end of each phase using a one page open ended questionnaire.
• Student outcomes were assessed through exam performance.

Analysis/Results
The one-way ANOVA with teaching method (P=.03) had a significant association with the mean exam score. Mean unit exam scores for lecture vs collaborative groups vs lecture were significantly higher (87.126% vs 84.398%; p=.02).
• Lecture vs collaborative & wiki were also significantly higher (87.126% vs 83.557%; p=.02).
• The proportion of students that passed the unit exam was not different between the three phases.
• The students’ perception of collaborative learning was positive as they enjoyed the problem solving, "real-life" nature of the learning experience.
• Students had a negative perception of collaborative learning in that they found it difficult to identify what material to study for unit exams.