Innovative Evaluation Strategies for Distance Graduate Nursing Students
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Improving communication among healthcare providers has been identified as a national goal by both The Joint Commission and Institute for Healthcare Communication (TJC, 2013; IHC, 2011).

Inaccurate and poor communication have been identified as significant contributors to sentinel events within the healthcare setting (TJC, 2013).

Faculty continue to encounter challenges related to identifying appropriate and innovative methods to evaluate student communication in the clinical setting as well as providing a controlled environment to offer feedback to students related to patient management strategies.

Online Simulation

Involved Pediatric Acute Care and Adult-Gerontology Acute Care nurse practitioner (NP) students in order to prepare for rounding in the hospital setting and to strengthen presentation to preceptors.

Students were assigned into groups of 3-4.

Each student was assigned 1 of 4 scenarios that included a chief complaint with limited HPI, PMH and PE findings.

Students then prepared a preceptor presentation, identified differential diagnoses, and presented a diagnosis and management plan.

Faculty facilitated simulated rounding amongst students via WebEx.

Identification of missing pertinent information was necessary in order for the student to narrow differential diagnoses and develop a management plan.

Evaluation

Group members and faculty gave feedback and further discussed the simulated scenario.

Grand Rounds

Grand Rounds were utilized as an interactive method of teaching in advanced DNP clinical courses with a focus on application of clinical concepts to real patient scenarios.

Each NP student provided a 10 to 15 minute presentation of an interesting patient that they encountered in their clinical experiences.

Some courses completed this in a simultaneous virtual format, while others had students record their presentations and discussion was completed via a discussion board.

After the case was presented, the student posed questions to the group regarding differential diagnoses, diagnostic reasoning, and development of a management plan.

Further discussion included clinical pearls, evidence based practice, and policy development.

Outcomes

• With an online education format, the students were able to interact with each other; providing opportunity for student to student interaction through group activities and simulated scenarios.

• Faculty and student feedback to assignments encouraged open communication for future interactions with other healthcare workers and patients.

• Students were able to simulate assessment of patients without visualizing the patient using a good history, diagnostic results, and communication from other health providers, patients, and parents.

Simulated On Call Day

Faculty for NP students in their residency course identified that students would benefit from further preparation in being an independent provider.

Faculty had limited ways to evaluate students' ability to manage patients "on the spot" for distance education program.

Acute Care Students

Students were assigned to be “on-call” with a faculty member for an eight hour day and were called with simulated patient concerns, lab values, or changes in clinical conditions.

The student then decided if he/she needed to come to the bedside and evaluate the patient or alter the treatment plan by phone.

An average of 8-10 patients were simulated with topics including: hematuria, new shortness of breath, hyperkalemia, diarrhea, fall, uncontrolled pain, and hyperglycemia.

Primary Care Students

Students were assigned an on-call day.

Students were sent a text to return calls to either 2 adult patients (Adult/Gero students) or 2 parent concerns (FNP) with questions regarding complaints such as ear pain, cough, vomiting, fever, and back pain.

The faculty played the role of the patient, family member, or parent. Students asked questions and developed a management plan.

Evaluation

The grading rubric for this activity included professional communication, critical thinking, and accuracy of management plan.

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