

Practice Summary Paper

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My decision to return to school to obtain my BSN was centered on aspiration and requirement. I put off going back to school for over 25 years and I came up with many reasons not to go back. It was a frightening experience returning to school after such a lengthy period of time. I have always been an advocate for education and encourage others to pursue educational opportunities. I believe I will have more credibility and influence when encouraging fellow nurses to pursue higher education if I do so myself. It has always been important to me to continually challenge myself and seek knowledge to share with others. Obtaining my BSN is proof of my belief in education and commitment to my career. Also, as I grow older, I felt I needed to obtain my BSN to open up other opportunities not available to me with my current degree.

My initial goal was to consider entering into management. During the BSN program, I have reconsidered that goal. I am now considering a career as a nurse educator. By being a bachelor's prepared nurse, I am more knowledgeable about research and how to apply the information to my nursing practice. I am more confident in my ability to take on challenges that are uncomfortable and take me out of my comfort zone. I am the preceptor in my department and I feel the skills I have gained from this program helped me in many ways including research, writing, and teaching skills.

Critical thinking

One of the key concepts to being an effective nurse is the ability to think critically and is emphasized in the BSN program at ODU. There were many assignments to meet this requirement. An assignment in N402 required me to identify a problem in my workplace and describe the gap between what is expected and the current conditions. I identified a problem

with patients undergoing complex surgical procedures not having a type and cross-match and blood available. I concluded that critical thinking was impaired leading to this lapse in providing the appropriate interventions necessary to ensure the patients safety. I pointed out the implications and consequences for the patient in the event they should need blood and it would not be available. By implementing critical thinking, reasoning, judgment, and the nursing process we can provide safer patient care.

Nursing Practice

The Therapeutic Nursing Intervention assignment in N403 required me to address a problem in my clinical environment. I was aware of the inconsistency of care with patients with multi-drug resistant organisms (MDROs). Staff was confused and frustrated due to the inconsistencies. Infection control is paramount in healthcare and especially so in the perioperative environment. I obtained information from the unit policy, institutional policy, current evidence based information, Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and The Joint Commission (TJC) regarding contact precautions, surgical site infections, and infection control practices. I proposed interventions to correct the inconsistencies to comply with the policy, recommended practices, and guidelines. I created a PowerPoint presentation to address the correct practice and handling of patients on contact precautions with MDROs. By providing this information to my colleagues, I hope to increase patient and staff safety by influencing change and consistency in our current practices.

Communication

Good communication skills are imperative in nursing. Being able to express yourself in a professional, clear, succinct and effective manner will aid in all aspects of nursing and patient care. The various discussion boards and group projects required communicating by posting on

the topics and responding to our classmates. We were encouraged to post our thoughts on a subject and provide a response or rebuttal to the other group members. A discussion board post regarding ethics in N403 encouraged us to choose from one of three case studies and post our thoughts on the ethical dilemmas. We then had to post a rebuttal or agreement with the other group member's posts. This exercise strengthened my ability to communicate my views clearly and effectively with others in a professional and respectful manner.

The group projects involved frequent contact using a variety of avenues such as email, discussion board posts, wiki posts, text messaging, phone calls, and creation of google documents for editing and collaborating. In N363 our group project centered on patient safety and prevention of wrong site surgery. It required the team members to collaborate and respond to each other in a professional manner even when there was a difference of opinion. All these assignments have helped me attain this crucial skill.

Teaching

Teaching is something we incorporate every day in performance of our job. We must be able to assess the needs of the patients, families, or coworkers to develop a plan to accomplish the teaching goal. A project in N402 assisted in the attainment of this skill. I chose to address hand hygiene compliance in my department. I had to develop a needs assessment and a teaching plan with goals. I learned the importance of assessing a group and their styles of learning based on age, gender, culture, experience, and learning preference. By understanding the needs of a diverse group of learners I incorporated several different teaching techniques to appeal to visual, auditory, and tactile learning styles. I provided written and audiovisual aids in combination with hands on training. This project was a great learning experience and it was beneficial to my department and improving infection control practices.

Research

Valid research is very important to evidence based nursing practice. I have had many opportunities during the BSN program to learn about, and critically appraise the information, methods, and validity of study findings. One assignment in N363 involved reading and critiquing an article. My group's assigned article was a study on neonatal cord care in India. I had to decide if it was a research study or informative article, variables, qualitative or quantitative evidence, contained a hypothesis, the theoretical framework, and the level of evidence provided. I then had to read and analyze another article from another group and post a response on their discussion board. In doing this assignment I gained information and insight as to how to critically analyze information before sharing it with peers or using it to encourage changes in current practices.

Leadership

Being a leader is something that comes natural for some nurses and it is a skill that must be encouraged and nurtured in others. Leadership encompasses many traits such as professional accountability, guidance, management, and patient advocacy. In N403 we were given the Therapeutic Nursing Intervention assignment to identify an area in our current practice setting that did not meet the accepted clinical guidelines or practices. I identified infection control inconsistencies in the handling of patients with MDROs in the perioperative environment. I developed a PowerPoint presentation and recently gave an educational inservice at the unit department meeting. I have also shared it with the anesthesia providers. By taking on this project I exhibited leadership abilities to recognize a problem and follow through with a plan to improve patient safety and care. This is just one of the many assignments the BSN program has offered to assist in the growth of my leadership skills.

Professionalism

Exhibiting professionalism is very important to have credibility in the healthcare environment. It is difficult to choose just one assignment in the RN to BSN program that encouraged professional behavior. The many discussion boards required professional responses or rebuttals to classmate's posts. An example is the ethics assignment in N403. We had to post our opinions and rationale on one of the ethical dilemmas presented to us. We then had to post a rebuttal to a classmate to their opinion and rationale. I met this requirement in this assignment by responding with a dissenting opinion to a classmate's post in a professional manner by providing opposing rationale in a respectful rebuttal. The many group projects also encouraged professionalism by encouraging frequent interaction of the members to accomplish a task.

Culture

The attainment of this competency came from an assignment in N401. We were given an assignment to explore another culture. I want to ensure I am providing appropriate, respectful care so I chose the Hispanic/Latino culture as they present to the hospital where I work for treatment. I found out many interesting things about the culture I was totally unaware of such as, the avoidance of eye contact with authority figures and elders to show respect and to avoid the "evil eye" which they believe will make them ill. Another aspect I found interesting is their belief illnesses are cold or hot, wet or dry, and are caused by imbalances between the person and their environment. This was also interesting because in N458 I created a wiki on the people of Laos. They also believe illnesses are caused by imbalances and are hot or cold. They both believe a "hot" illness requires a "cold" treatment and "cold" illness requires a "hot" treatment. By understanding the cultural norms and practices of patients from different cultural backgrounds their care can be better tailored to meet their needs and compliance to treatments.

Summary

I feel I have expanded and increased my knowledge in many areas while progressing in the BSN program. One goal I had early on was to become a better writer. I feel I have achieved this goal by the many writing assignments in the program. I have gained more confidence in the care I give to my patients, approaching problems and providing solutions, collaborating on or leading group projects, understanding the role culture plays in providing appropriate therapies, and teaching to both patients and other staff members. Understanding how to interpret nursing research and how to use it to influence current practices by using evidence based information will aid in my endeavors to improve patient care. The BSN program has strengthened my passion for nursing and patient advocacy that includes involvement in political issues that affect nursing, community health, and patient care. I feel I have gained more leadership skills that will help me in my current role as preceptor. Overall, the BSN program has been a very challenging and great experience. I have grown personally and professionally and I am sure the education and knowledge I have acquired from this program will continue to benefit and influence my practice now and in the future.

Before entering the BSN program I never considered that I had a nursing theory or philosophy that guided my practice. After learning about the theorists, their ideas, and philosophies I realized my nursing care has been based in some of their concepts. Dorothea Orem's Self Care Deficit Nursing Theory (SCDNT) is the framework for how I think of providing care for patients. I believe patients want to help themselves and it is up to the nurse to provide the appropriate amount of care to encourage independence. I apply these principles every day in the care of the surgical patients in my care. Learning about the other theorists work such as Betty Neuman, Jean Watson, and Imogene King gave me a different view of nursing

theory and has influenced and reinforced my personal philosophy of caring for patients in a caring, open, respectful, and holistic manner to meet their physical and psychosocial needs.

My nursing practice has undeniably benefited from the knowledge I have received while in the BSN program. I am more confident and I willingly step up to initiate changes in my practice environment. Understanding how to evaluate research adds validity to the information I give to others, and use, to influence changes to our practice. The projects related to teaching have expanded my knowledge base and given me tools to be a better teacher. The confidence I have gained from the BSN program has encouraged me to explore other areas of nursing such as nurse educator, infection control, and quality assurance.

ODU Honor code

“I pledge to support the Honor System of Old Dominion University. I will refrain from any form of academic dishonesty or deception, such as cheating or plagiarism. I am aware that as a member of the academic community it is responsibility to turn in all suspected violators of the Honor Code. I will report to a hearing if summoned.”

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