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Building a Strong Workforce: Toolkits for Nursing Leadership Skills Development

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Abstract

Introduction

Clear communication between patients, family members, and health care professionals is essential for positive patient outcomes and good working relationships. Yet research shows that 50% of preventable medical errors are attributed to miscommunication. Teamwork and collaboration are among the six Quality and Safety Education for Nurses competencies for nurses but new nurses often lack opportunities to develop these skills within their nursing education programs.

To address this need, the Salisbury University School of Nursing (SUSON), in cooperation with hospital partners, developed three web-based toolkits to build communication skills.

Design/Implementation

Three web-based toolkits were created, Personal and Patient Advocacy, Conflict Management, and Interprofessional Collaboration, according to a template for a consistent look and ease of navigation. Each toolkit begins with objectives and activities designed to introduce the topic. The next section contains a partially scripted simulation conducted with trained actors or volunteers. This interaction allows learners to practice skills in a safe and controlled environment. Afterwards, learners debrief, reflect on their experience, and give constructive feedback to one another. Toolkits wrap up with activities designed to encourage further reflection, research, and engagement with the topic.

The Personal and Patient Advocacy toolkit focuses on speaking up for patients and oneself using communication phrases and techniques to discuss concerns with calm and assertiveness. The Conflict Management toolkit recognizes the high-stress environment of health care and its effect on relationships between professionals and patients/family members. Conflicts of varying levels of intensity, from highly charged arguments to more subtle affronts, all potentially affect patient outcomes. Therefore, it is important to recognize and address each level of intensity. In the Interprofessional Collaboration toolkit, learners build skills in understanding a variety of perspectives, managing priorities from everyone, and meeting expectations as a reliable team member. Learning how to work together more effectively improves patient care and workplace environments.

All toolkit courses are designed to be customized according to the needs of the learners within partner hospitals. Members of the SUSON toolkit team meet with hospital representatives to identify the toolkit course to be offered and the timeframe. Next, activities are selected and facilitators are identified. SUSON toolkit content experts work with hospital facilitators to ensure that best practices in course delivery are used. The course is published and learners are invited to register.

Evaluations/Findings

While still in the pilot phase, this collaboration between education and practice shows great promise. Quantitative and qualitative data collected from learners and facilitators will help determine effectiveness of specific activities and overall satisfaction with the quality of the toolkits and guide changes.

Recommendations/Implications

Toolkit courses provide standardized, easy-to-use learning materials. Given the variety of activities in each toolkit, there is flexibility in course design for different learner groups. Support from toolkit personnel assists hospitals in customizing and delivering each course. New nurses have opportunities to further develop communication skills, and facilitators gain confidence in their own teaching abilities. Sharing resources between academia and practice is vital to continue building a strong nursing workforce.