Designing an Online Graduate Addictions Nursing Curriculum: Lessons Learned About Accessibility and Engagement

Katherine Fornili, DNP, MPH, RN, CARN, FIAAN; Charon Burda, DNP, PMHCNS, PMHNP-BC,CARN-AP; Joanne Pinna, MS; Victoria Selby, PhD, CRNP-PMH, PMHNP-BC, CARN-AP; Alison Trinkoff, ScD, MPH, RN, FAAN

Abstract

Overview

This presentation will describe the development process for an innovative, 12-credit Substance Use and Addictions Nursing (SUAN) online graduate certificate program. Faculty collaborated with an instructional design learning technologist to develop online courses and modules that are consistent with nationally recognized standards for excellence and continuous quality improvement. This presentation will include theoretical and evidenced-based rationale for the instructional design strategies utilized as well as the adherence to national standards for course development that reflects a commitment to ensuring that online addictions nursing content is accessible, equitable, engaging, and interactive.

Background

Ideally, online learning is fully interactive, regardless of whether it is delivered synchronously or asynchronously. Except for instructor-related variables, students find that course design is the most important aspect of distance learning. To promote achievement of stated learning objectives and competencies, faculty must ensure that learning activities support learner interaction and engagement and that online content adheres to key principles of accessible design. While our online program was developed before the COVID-19 pandemic, distance learning became even more important given that the first two courses were launched during the COVID-19 shutdown. The purpose of this project was to develop online addictions nursing courses for the certificate that utilize innovative and high quality instructional design principles and practices to address the needs of a diverse student body.

Methods

In collaboration with an expert instructional design learning technologist at the University of Maryland School of Nursing (UMSON), faculty set out to utilize the Quality Matters rubric and the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Accessibility Initiative standards to ensure that our

courses promote high levels of student engagement, interactivity, equity, and accessibility. This poster presentation will first describe the components of the UMSON learning management system (LMS) and other applications utilized for developing and delivering online content. The presentation will include lessons learned about creating interactive, engaging online lessons that promote active learning and engagement with faculty and peers. It will also provide additional recommendations for developing accessible and inclusive course content to ensure that people of all abilities have equal access to information and functionality.

Results

These are new courses, so there are limited evaluation data to date. The mean overall evaluation score for the first course offered was 4.94 on a 5-point scale. Students indicated that the LMS navigation was easily executed (4.95), that effective teaching strategies were used (4.5), that learning activities were consistent with content (5.0), that content logically followed objectives (5.0), and anecdotally, that the educational videos embedded within the modules contributed greatly to their learning.

Conclusions

There is a growing need for building addictions treatment service capacity and a recognition of the importance of training nurses at all levels about substance-use and related disorders. Internal and external reviews of online courses help to ensure compliance with national standards and create a culture that is focused on quality assurance and continuous improvement.