



Advancing Education Transformation: A Standardized Approach to Teach Essential Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing Skills

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With shorter lengths of stay, increased competition for clinical placements, and restrictions that prohibit students from caring for patients deemed to be too unstable, some undergraduate students may not have opportunities to care for individuals with common mental health issues. Nurse educators are seeking alternative ways to provide clinical experiences in which students can practice essential skills to care for individuals with mental illness. Standardized patient experiences (SPEs), allow students to practice communication and other skills essential to psychiatric mental health nursing in a safe simulated learning environment. To prepare students to care for "real" patients with mental health needs, we developed a series of toolkits for use in an undergraduate psychiatric mental health nursing clinical course. Each web-based toolkit was designed to meet a core skill set and was packaged to include learning objectives, pre-simulation activity, clinical assignment, video vignette, feedback rubric, and suggested post-simulation activities. Video vignettes involved the use of SPEs to demonstrate and teach content. Each toolkit also provides faculty with strategies aimed at helping students apply psychiatric mental health nursing skills in a clinical setting. Toolkits were specifically designed to address: therapeutic relationship and professional boundaries, management of hallucinations and delusions, assessment of suicidal ideation, limit setting for manic patients, cognitive evaluation of dementia, and management of withdrawal in addictions. This creative approach to psychiatric mental health nursing education using simulation, specifically Standardized Patients (SPs) has enabled nursing faculty to provide consistent clinical experiences for all students that focus on teaching essential psychiatric mental health nursing competencies. Funded by a Maryland Higher Education Commission Nurse Support Program-II grant, these free, web-based toolkits are now available to all nurse educators in Maryland. This session will provide an overview of the development, use, and evaluation of this clinical learning strategy.