



In newly graduated nurses, what foundational level soft skills are thought to be most relevant for entry into practice?

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Background

Newly graduate nurses tend to experience difficulty in transitioning from their former role of nursing student into their new role of practicing nurse. The challenge they face may cause increased levels of anxiety, insecurity, inadequacy and instability, ultimately paving the way for the new nurse to consider leaving or physically exiting the profession all together. (Dwyer, P. A., et al., 2016; Phillips, C., et al., (2014). To date a number of studies and literature reviews have been done to identify how to best support this vulnerable population of nurses however no one theme has been recognized as a defining factor. Instead there appears to be a multifactorial interplay between intrapersonal, interpersonal and organizational factors (Dwyer, P.A., et al., 2016).

Project Aim

The aim of our project was to compile the essential soft skills needed for a newly graduate nurse to be successful upon entry into practice. These findings would be incorporated into the two and four year academic curriculums and nurse residency programs. Having knowledge of these key soft skills would allow for a fluid transition into nursing practice.

Literature Review

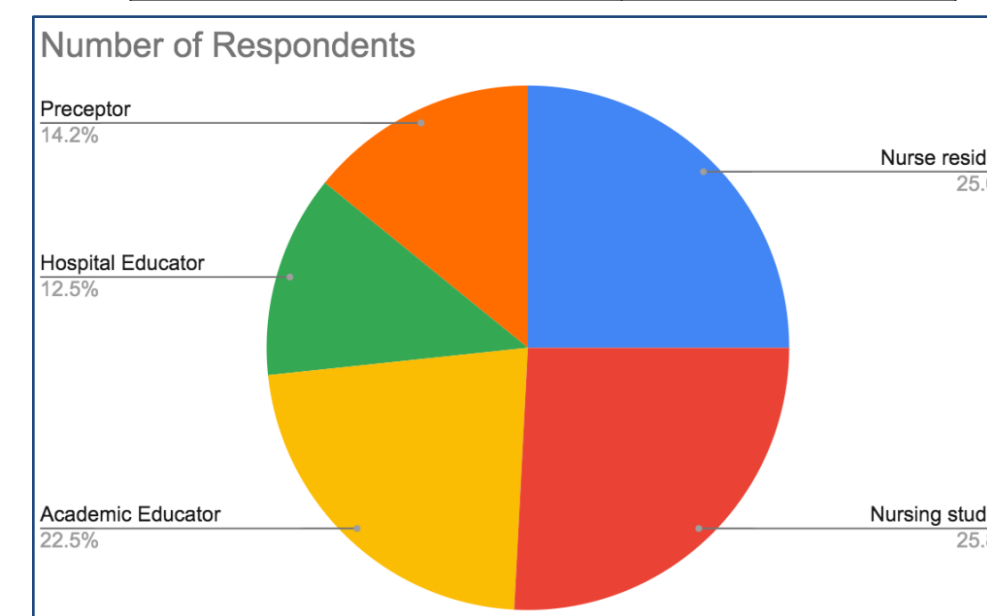
According to Theisen and Sandau (2013), analysis of the research identified several competencies that are important for new graduates, including communication, leadership, organization, critical thinking, specific situations and stress management. In a study conducted by (Gregg, J.C., 2020; Sortedahl, C., et al., 2020) results showed that the competencies of technical skills, critical thinking, components of emotional intelligence such as communication, self awareness, conflict management, professionalism were the lowest performing competencies demonstrated by the newly graduated nurses. In reviewing articles for this project, the literature provided valuable insight with the most common recommendation in the studies being implementation of nurse residency programs with orientation. The main goal of these nurse residency programs is to transition new graduate nurses into competent practicing nurses (Theisen, J.L., and Sandau, K.E. 2013).

Survey

What soft skills do you wish new grads came prepared with during the beginning of nurse residency program? Please select your top 3 with 1 being the highest.

	1	2	3
Resilience, adaptability, flexibility in a crisis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interprofessional Communication Skills (SBAR, Shift Report)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge of nursing quality indicators (NDNQI)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge and application of mindfulness techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to give and accept feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crucial conversation skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principles of communication with patients/family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Basic professional conduct (punctuality, dress code, civility, work ethic...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adheres to legal and ethical standards and guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ownership of one's professional development and advancement through organizational involvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other. Please proceed to next question.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Role in the Organization	Number of Respondents
Nurse resident	30
Nursing student	31
Academic Educator	27
Hospital Educator	15
Preceptor	17
	120



Results

Soft Skill	First	Second	Third	Total Responses
Resilience, adaptability, flexibility in a crisis	39	15	15	69
Interprofessional Communication Skills (SBAR, Shift Report)	31	34	12	77
Knowledge of Nursing Quality Indicators	1	8	6	15
Knowledge and Application of Mindfulness Techniques	4	3	4	11
Ability to Give and Accept Feedback	9	11	21	41
Crucial Conversation Skills	5	13	9	27
Principles of Communication with Patients and Family	8	11	13	32
Basic Professional Conduct (punctuality, dress code, civility, work ethic)	11	15	20	46
Adheres to legal and ethical standards and guidelines	7	3	10	20
Ownership of one's professional development and advancement through organizational involvement	3	5	7	15

Level of Importance	First	Second	Third
Nurse Resident	Resilience, adaptability, flexibility in a crisis	Interprofessional communication skills (SBAR, Shift Report)	Interprofessional communication skills (SBAR, Shift Report)
Nursing Student	Resilience, adaptability, flexibility in a crisis	Resilience, adaptability, flexibility in a crisis	Adheres to legal and ethical standards and guidelines
Academic Educator	Interprofessional communication skills (SBAR, Shift Report)	Interprofessional communication skills (SBAR, Shift Report)	Resilience, adaptability, flexibility in a crisis
Hospital Educator	Resilience, adaptability, flexibility in a crisis	Interprofessional communication skills (SBAR, Shift Report)	Ability to give and accept feedback
Preceptor	Resilience, adaptability, flexibility in a crisis	Interprofessional communication skills (SBAR, Shift Report)	Resilience, adaptability, flexibility in a crisis

Conclusions

Through literature reviews and a survey, it is confirmed that transition into practice for newly graduated nurses should be a joint effort between schools of nursing and first career placements. A common thread between previous and current research is the possession of qualities related to emotional intelligence in bedside practice. Communication is a strong theme related to not only exchange of clinical information about patients, but also the ability to give and accept feedback. Less information in the literature was found on basic workplace expectations, but it was ranked highly in this small survey. Ultimately, the information gathered in this undertaking is aligned with previous research, and reinforces the need for schools of nursing and clinical sites or frequent employers of newly graduated nurses to work together to ensure that transition into practice includes the identified soft skills.

Recommendations

- Nurse residency program - technical skills, communication, critical thinking, and professionalism.
- Adjusting nursing curriculum to incorporate these soft skills throughout the 2 and 4 year nursing programs across the state of Maryland.
- Partnering the two settings of academia and practice will allow both to collaborate and better prepare nursing graduates as well as existing nurse graduates.
- Schools of nursing should incorporate activities that address emotional intelligence.

References

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