Edinboro University
Department of Nursing
Student Learning Outcome Assessment
Academic Year 2013-2014

Problem: Students indicated in follow-up assessments that the transition from student to nurse was difficult.

Action: Development of the Senior Practicum Experience

Description: During the senior level NURS 403/Adult Health Nursing course, students’ clinical experience consisted of 10 weeks of traditional clinical experience during which time they fully met the clinical objectives. They were then assigned to a Registered Nurse Preceptor during the last 4 weeks of the clinical portion of this course. Students were provided with a practicum booklet that outlined the process step-by-step, along with student, preceptor, and faculty responsibilities. Within the 4-week period, students were to complete a total of 64 hours, with no more than 16 hours per week.

Evaluation: After this experience, the students and their preceptors each filled out a questionnaire to evaluate the experience. Items on the student questionnaire that were addressed included:

- Preparation for the practicum experience
- Understanding of practicum expectations of the student
- Fulfillment of personal learning objectives
- Faculty availability as needed
- If the experience with the preceptor was positive
- The most valuable aspect of this experience
- What could be changed to make this experience better

Items addressed on the Preceptor questionnaire included:

- Preparation for the practicum experience
- Understanding of practicum expectations of the preceptor
- Ability to assist the student to fulfill learning objectives
- Faculty availability
- If the experience with the assigned student was positive
- The most valuable aspect of this experience
- What could be changed to make the experience better

Results of Questionnaire: Senior students responded to the questionnaire each upon completion of the fall and spring sessions. A likert scale from 1-5 was used with 1 being ‘Strongly Disagree’ to 5 being ‘Strongly Agree’ for the first 5 items of each list above. Responses from both the students and preceptors all fell in the ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ areas. The narrative responses from the students regarding the most valuable aspects included:

- Growth in skills, organization, and confidence
- Ability to practice delegation
More ‘hands-on’ experiences that occur during a nurse’s shift
Ability to manage multiple patients
Ability to prioritize patient care
More independence
Ability to improve critical thinking/decision making skills

Student responses regarding what could be changed included:
- Overwhelming response to increase the hours/more weeks in practicum
- To develop a practicum experience for students to work in nursing units for which they are most interested in pursuing post graduation

Preceptor narrative responses regarding the most valuable aspects included:
- Seeing students learning how to prioritize patients and care
- More opportunity for students to obtain ‘hands-on’ experience
- Help students to obtain ‘real-life’ experience
- Managing care of many types of patients with a variety of care needs ranging from chronic illness to dialysis to patients on ventilators
- Observation of increased communication skills with patients, families, physicians, and other nurses and health care personnel
- Good trauma exposure
- To assist students in learning some specific nurse tips/strategies for organizing care
- Seeing the students applying more theoretical knowledge to practice

Preceptor responses regarding what could be changed included:
- Overwhelming responses to increase the number of hours/weeks for the practicum experience
- Nothing!

Actions: First, we addressed the overwhelming responses regarding the length of the practicum experience. Beginning in the fall of 2014, the practicum time increased from 4 weeks to 7 weeks. This shift has also required students to be more vigilant in meeting the clinical objectives prior to the start of practicum. Also, faculty needed to allot appropriate time for the various pre-practicum experiences. At this point, we cannot offer a practicum experience outside of the medical/surgical nursing area as the current allotment of time is associated with the medical/surgical theory course. We are considering developing a semester long practicum that would be more conducive to meeting the desired nursing specialty of the students. But most nursing care revolves around the principles that students obtain in medical/surgical nursing. Assessment is ongoing to determine the effectiveness of the increased time for the practicum experience.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Weschler, EdD, MSN, RN
Nursing Department Representative for SLOA, and Chairperson for the Undergraduate Program Evaluation Committee for the Department of Nursing

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