



March 2021

Joining Forces: A Response to Limited Clinical Sites During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Katherine Dixon
University of Louisiana Monroe, dixon@ulm.edu

Leah Hawsey
University of Louisiana Monroe, lhawsey@ulm.edu

Jan Shows
University of Louisiana Monroe, jshows@ulm.edu

Candace Gandy
University of Louisiana Monroe, gandy@ulm.edu

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Recommended Citation

Dixon, K., Hawsey, L., Shows, J., & Gandy, C. (2021). Joining Forces: A Response to Limited Clinical Sites During the Covid-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Interprofessional Practice and Collaboration*, 3(1). Retrieved from <https://repository.ulm.edu/ojihp/vol3/iss1/6>

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Joining Forces: A Response to Limited Clinical Sites During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Abstract

Students who are unable to attend Pediatric clinical during the COVID-19 Pandemic needed an alternative method to meet the clinical objectives of the nursing curriculum. Utilizing semester-five management students to implement a simulation activity with the semester three pediatric students allowed the opportunity to simulate clinical experiences and develop interpersonal, clinical, and professional skills. Allowing the semester five students to pre-brief, implement, debrief, educate and mentor the semester-three pediatric students allowed the students to meet their course objectives and develop skills in patient-centered care, safety, informatics, documentation, delegation, education, and mentoring.

Keywords

Simulation, management, leadership, Covid-19 pandemic, nursing

Introduction

2020 was The Year of the Nurse. This was supposed to be our year, our moment in the spot-light, and that it was. However, it was not the spotlight any nurse (or nursing student) would ever wish for. The global COVID-19 pandemic rocked our world in a way we could have never imagined. This held true for every one of us, and nursing faculty and students were not spared any angst in the ordeal. In January of 2020, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in the United States. With this diagnosis, things such as quarantine, social distancing, lockdown, and mandatory mask-wearing became part of the everyday norm. Although this posed problems for all individuals in all professions, we as nursing faculty had our own unique set of problems to solve in attempting to educate future healthcare workers. Threatened with the loss of clinical sites and experiences, we turned to alternative avenues to provide adequate learning experiences for our students. One opportunity, in particular, provided not only pediatric simulation experience for students in Maternal Child Health courses, but also management experience for our senior nursing students. Faculty and students alike quickly discovered that although hospital clinical experience cannot be replaced, there are invaluable learning opportunities within the walls of Kitty Degree School of Nursing.

Identifying the plan

In a typical semester, semester three pediatric nursing students engage in simulation experiences where they are introduced to real-life medical scenarios that involve children and are expected to function in the role of a nurse. This was our saving grace during COVID-19, as it provided an alternative to attending clinical experience when faculty were not allowed on side due to regulations concerning the pandemic. It was noted that some students did not have a simulation opportunity to replace clinical experiences. This problem left faculty searching

desperately for mandatory management experiences for senior nursing students. During the brainstorming session, the faculty members recognized that the simulation experience did not have to be limited to semester three pediatric nursing students. There was a role in each simulation scenario for senior management nursing students. With this idea, the faculty went to work writing a plan that would incorporate senior students as managers into each simulation day.

Pre-briefing

Faculty provided demonstration and orientation to the senior management nursing students. This allowed the senior management nursing students to familiarize the semester three pediatric nursing students to the simulation room. The orientation included the following:

- New medication dispense system
- Hospital room
- Bed control
- Whiteboards
- Medication room
- Supply cart
- IV pump
- Patient monitor
- Simulation manikin capabilities
- Monitoring equipment
- Sim control system
- Audio controls
- Recording/viewing system.

The senior management nursing students have experienced multiple curricular simulation activities. These students were able to take their experiences and use them to educate and prepare semester three pediatric nursing students for the day. Pre-briefing provides time to decrease the semester three pediatric nursing students' anxiety before the simulation activity.

An orientation to the simulation lab before the simulation serves to prepare and orient learners to the simulation experience. By providing the semester three pediatric students with an adequate orientation from the senior management nursing students, students' anxiety was minimized by creating a psychologically safe environment. This practice of orientation to the simulation lab by the senior management nursing students optimized the learning experience by keeping the participants engaged. The senior management nursing students encouraged the semester three pediatric nursing students to learn from their mistakes, allowing for greater depth of discussion and insight into their thought process during the debriefing. The orientation by the senior management nursing students in the simulation lab prior to the simulation led to a reduction in stress by the semester three pediatric nursing students as verbalized by all students in debriefing. The experience empowered the relationship between a novice nursing student and a more experienced nursing student for a mutually beneficial outcome. This leadership activity also built confidence in the senior management nursing student and solidified previous knowledge learned throughout nursing school. The outcome was magical for all involved.

Results

Semester five nursing courses are vital for developing leadership and management skills, as well as, developing delegation and mentorship qualities for graduating nursing students. Allowing the management and leadership nursing students to implement, operate, and evaluate the pediatric simulation with the semester three pediatric nursing students reinforced the core competencies of the course. These competencies include implementing patient-centered care, safety, working within interdisciplinary teams, utilizing informatics, and applying professional

skills. Professionalism competencies include communication, delegation, professional behavior, application of the nursing process, mentoring and leading others, and education and evaluation.

During the semester-five post-conference, the students described what they thought were the learning opportunities for both groups of students. Through open discussion, the students verbally described the benefits for the semester-three pediatric students to include

- The opportunity to learn from advanced senior nursing students. Mentorship between students allows the lower-level students to feel non-threatened and hopeful in accomplishing the goals of nursing school.
- Education and reinforcement of skills and procedures throughout the simulation process allowed the semester-three students to gain new knowledge and reinforce their clinical skills.
- Reinforcement of patient-centered care.

Delivering patient-centered care is a competency for both the semester-three and semester-five course outcomes. Allowing semester-five students the opportunity to demonstrate a higher level of patient-centered care allowed the semester three pediatric students to realize that skill development, and professionalism skills become more advanced with each semester. This observation can instill hope and goal development among semester-three students. Further development of patient-centered care skills improves the implementation of holistic care and reinforces the importance of implementing the nursing process. Assessing, diagnosing, planning, implementing, and evaluating nursing interventions is noted throughout the simulation process. During the debriefing, semester-three students verbalize learning what went well and what could be done to improve outcomes.

“The student mentor role appears to improve leadership, knowledge, communication, networking and confidence. Participants – both mentors and mentees – reported feeling inspired, challenged, rewarded, confident and generally happier. In light of the benefits that have emerged from the pilot study, peer mentoring should be made available to more student nurses.”(Cust, F (2018) Increasing confidence of first-year student nurses with peer mentoring. *Nursing Times* [online]; 114: 10, 51-53).

In conclusion, when semester five nursing students lead simulation activities for semester three nursing students, many competencies can be met that lead to personal and professional growth. This growth can lead to increased competencies, increase confidence, and the opportunity to experience the mentor and mentee relationship.

(Cust F (2018) Increasing confidence of first-year student nurses with peer mentoring. *Nursing Times* [online]; 114: 10, 51-53).