E3-1: Effects of an Internship Program on Clinical Competence of Nursing Students

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Abstract:
Introduction: Nurse shortage is a worldwide problem while high stress from new environment and low competence may be contributors for high turnover of new graduates. The purpose of this interventional longitudinal study was to implement and test effects of a nursing internship
program on nursing students’ clinical competence. Research questions included (a) Do students' clinical competence increase after the program? (b) are students satisfied with the program? and (c) are students willing to work at the hospital they practiced?

**Method(s):** All (206) nursing students at their last year of nursing practicum at a nursing school and 186 nurse preceptors in 13 hospitals participated in the study. Mean age of the students was 22.13 (SD=.90) and 82% practiced at medical/surgical or ICU/ER. Preceptors practiced a mean of 7.47 (SD=3.72) years. Each preceptor instructed 1-2 students. Students worked the same shifts with their preceptors and took care of some of their preceptors’ patients for 26 days within 6 weeks. Students are assessed for clinical competence, stress, and turnover in their first year after graduation. Only data from pre- and post-program were used in this preliminary analysis. The Clinical Competence Scale with alpha of .98 was used. Descriptive statistics and t test were used. The study provided only subjective perception of competence; yet, was rigor in its longitudinal design.

**Results:** Students did not perceive very high level of stress (M=6.72 on a 0-10 scale). Their clinical competence did not differ by where they practiced. Less than 2% of students were not satisfied with the program or preceptors. Students had higher competence after the program (t=2.76, p=.01); however, preceptors did not rate their instructed students’ competence as high as students’ self-rating (t=6.99, p<.001). 73.9% and 60% of students considered to work at the hospital and the unit they practiced, respectively, after graduation. Prolong the program was suggested by students.

**Discussion & Conclusions:** The internship program increased students’ clinical competence and willingness to work at hospitals they practiced. Studies may conduct to explore factors influencing new nurses’ clinical competence. Programs may be designed and started earlier in different stages of clinical practicum.

**Abstract History:**
This abstract has not been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

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