

Expanding the Spheres of Care: A Program Gap Analysis and Needs Assessment

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Topic: AACN Essentials

Category: Quality Improvement/Evidence-Based Practice Project

Abstract

Background/Introduction

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) new Essentials highlight the need for nurses to be prepared to practice in a variety of clinical settings. Many nursing programs use a hospital-based education framework, although registered nurses can positively impact patient outcomes in additional spheres of care, such as disease prevention and chronic disease management. Well prepared primary care nurses can provide expertise in these areas.

Purpose

To assess the presence of primary care content in one baccalaureate program, and determine faculty needs for future program integration of primary care curriculum to expand the spheres of care.

Methods or Processes/Procedures

Program faculty evaluated their respective undergraduate courses for the presence of 32 primary care activities to determine gaps and opportunities for improvement. Courses were then analyzed for percentage of inclusion for each of the 32 primary care domains. Faculty also reported their comfort in delivering such content, as well as resources needed for further inclusion in program courses.

Results

Faculty responses (n=22) reflected one elective and all 18 required nursing courses. Activities most lacking within the curriculum were those unique to primary care, and activities most prevalent bridged to other facets of the program. The highest degree of primary care integration occurred during the final year of the program, while the lowest integration was during the second year. Four themes emerged from the free response data (n=14): concerns, integration suggestions, resources needed, and content recommendations.

Limitations

This project was limited to one baccalaureate program following a traditional curriculum.

Conclusions/Implications for Practice

Program integration of primary care activities provides an ideal opportunity to expand the spheres of care within nursing programs. In doing so, it is essential for programs to consider faculty feedback and comfort with such content to ensure successful assimilation of primary care curriculum.

Biography

Tara Burnham (she/her) is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Nursing at the University of Vermont (UVM) in Burlington, VT. Dr. Burnham earned her BSN from UVM in 1994, MSN from Northeastern University in 2001, and DNP from UVM in 2023. She teaches adult health, critical care nursing, and healthcare ethics for baccalaureate students. Her scholarly interests include curriculum development and active learning. Dr. Burnham believes that the integration of educational experiences in diverse settings is essential in preparing nursing students for practice in our ever-changing and complex healthcare system.

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