Charting the Pathway to Competency: A New Clinical Evaluation Process

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Abstract

Background/Introduction

The 2021 AACN standards focus on clinical judgment and skills essential to the first year of practice. Academic Nurse Educators lack valid and reliable tools to assess student performance in clinical settings.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to evaluate a new weekly clinical evaluation form (W-CEF) to improve the evaluation of essential skills for success as novice RNs.

Methods or Processes/Procedures

The new process, based on the Creighton Clinical Evaluation Instrument (C-CEI), was deployed in Summer 2022. C-CEI components were operationalized for the weekly form to support summative decisions at midterm and finals while providing ongoing formative evaluation. Students, clinical and simulation faculty, and non-faculty preceptors use the W-CEF to provide students with timely feedback.

Results

Preliminary data analysis revealed 2885 weekly assessments representing 330 students across 37 clinical facilities. A majority (86.7%) reflect performance in the clinical environment; 13.3% evaluated performance in simulation. Students were assessed by multiple evaluators. Approximately half (n=39) of evaluators were faculty; the rest (n=42) were non-faculty clinical preceptors. Nine weekly assessments captured substandard student performance. Eight of these students demonstrated improvement on weekly evaluations after implementation of an improvement plan. Aggregate data indicate consistent areas of concern for this program, including hand hygiene, infection control, patient identification, and medication administration.

Limitations

The C-CEI is validated only in the simulation setting. Inadequate demographic data restricted identification of socioeconomic risk factors but enabled blinded analysis. Early data from non-faculty preceptors is skewed due to insufficient evaluator education.

Conclusions/Implications for Practice

Academic nurse educators strive to prepare students for safe and competent practice. Critical evaluation and feedback are essential to student success. The W-CEF supports the early identification of and intervention for students who need additional support and provides an overview of cohort-level knowledge gaps and areas for program improvement.

Biography

Dr. SarahAnn McFadden is an assistant professor in the School of Nursing at Pacific Lutheran University. She teaches in both pre-licensure and graduate programs. Courses taught include nursing theory, healthcare diversity, epidemiology, biostatistics, and writing. She has also taught clinicals as well as in the lab. She is passionate about ensuring students have the supports needed to be successful in both nursing school and in their future practice.

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