

The use of a pre-examination stress intervention in senior nursing students

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Topic: Academic Nursing: Excellence & Innovation

Category: Quality Improvement/Evidence-Based Practice Project

Abstract

Background/Introduction

Stress is a complex phenomenon that has significant effects on students which may disturb their physiological, psychological, and spiritual health and well-being. The demands of nursing programs with heavy course loads and rigorous examinations within a competitive environment can lead to unattainable levels of stress.

Purpose

To provide nursing students with a stress reduction intervention prior to taking examinations.

Methods or Processes/Procedures

A stress intervention was introduced prior to nursing seniors taking their predictor exam. Data was collected for three consecutive years with a total of 87 student participants. The stress intervention began once students entered the examination room. An ocean waves soundtrack was playing with the lights dimmed in the room. Students were led through 90 seconds of light stretching followed by 1 minute of deep breathing exercises prior to taking the exam. Pre and post exam questionnaires and surveys were completed by students.

Results

Data from the study was extremely positive and noted that 97.7% of all students studied over 3 years reported they would use the stress intervention techniques implemented in the study to reduce stress in the future. Data from the 2017 cohort reported that 91.9% of students stated the stress intervention helped decrease their testing anxiety with 96% reporting decreased testing anxiety in the 2018 cohort and 83.3% with decreased testing anxiety in the 2019 cohort. Data from the 2017 and 2018 cohorts both reported 100% of students felt the stress intervention was helpful with 80% of students in 2019 reporting the intervention as being helpful.

Limitations

Limitations of the study included not accounting for other outside stressors.

Conclusions/Implications for Practice

Implications for future practice have been validated by the results of this study. Based on the positive results of this study, the integration of pre examination stress interventions in undergraduate nursing curricula should be considered to reduce pre exam stress among nursing students.

Biography

Dr. Bauer teaches in the undergraduate and graduate programs at Saint Mary's College. She enjoys working with students to reduce stress through prayer, exercise, and in class stress interventions. She also loves teaching about health promotion/disease prevention, is an advocate for epilepsy education and awareness, seizure first aid, down syndrome, and especially loves spending time with her 7 children who keep her busy! Her youngest daughter Mary Elizabeth is a true miracle and inspires their family to live life to the fullest everyday!

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