

Clinical Evaluation Through Transparency; The Importance of Anecdotal Documentation

Colleen Manzetti DNP, CNE, Associate Professor, Chair

Erica Sciarra PhD, DNP, APN, AGNP-c, CNE , Assistant Professor

Marjorie K. Unterberg School of Nursing and Health Studies



MONMOUTH
UNIVERSITY

NURSING

BACKGROUND

As we reimagine the future of nursing education and move towards a competency-based curriculum, direct observation of students in diverse practice settings must be consistently assessed and documented. Providing students with timely quantitative and qualitative formative feedback is paramount in developing their critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills (Lejongvist et al., 2016; Lewallen & Van Horn, 2019). In addition, allowing students to reflect on their performance can enhance their development of clinical judgement and perpetuate lifelong learning (Immonen et al., 2019).

PURPOSE

- To provide support for the use of anecdotal documentation as the gold standard when assessing clinical competence and providing feedback to students in the clinical environment.

PROCEDURE

- Implore clinical faculty to provide weekly written evaluations on student performance in addition to a skills checklist addressing opportunities for improvement as well as provide accolades on performance of specific competencies.
- Encourage faculty to provide pros and cons of each clinical day with documented areas of opportunity for improvement allowing for remediation prior to the next clinical day.
- Encourage students to reflect, comment, and/or sign the written evaluations while addressing any concerns raised by the student or instructor to close the feedback loop.

RESULTS

- Anecdotal documentation must be the gold standard when the clinical instructor is providing feedback regarding student clinical performance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Timely formative feedback may allow the student to improve their clinical performance while ensuring transparency between the clinical instructor and the student.
- Providing students with clear communication regarding areas of clinical strengths and opportunities for growth may progressively build on foundational competencies which may ultimately lead to successful performance in the competencies delineated in the 2021 Essentials.

LIMITATIONS

- The clinical instructor requires additional time and effort to write anecdotal notes in addition to/versus a checklist approach before the next clinical day in order to provide timely feedback.

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