To the Editor:

The article titled “Integrated Learning Through Student Goal Development” (Price, Tschannen, & Caylor, 2013), which was published in the September 2013 issue of the Journal of Nursing Education, really caught my eye. As a senior-level student in a baccalaureate nursing program at the University of Maine, I strongly believe the word goal has gotten me to where I am today. That article provided great scientific research to promote a new strategy to increase student learning in the clinical setting. The Clinical Goals Initiative (Price et al., 2013) is a student-directed learning model in which students develop three types of goals for the domains of cognitive knowledge and sciences, clinical reasoning and practical skilled know how, and ethical comportment and relational formation, prior to clinical experience. Students then shared these goals with nursing faculty and staff nurse mentors each week.

This model offers an excellent way for nursing students to communicate with faculty and staff nurses. During clinical rotations, I often found myself missing great opportunities to do something with a staff nurse because she or he was not aware that I would be interested. Examples of such experiences are inserting a Foley catheter, hanging maintenance fluids for intravenous administration, or inserting a nasogastric tube. Establishing goals with the staff nurse ahead of time serves as a great communication tool and gives him or her an idea of the students’ learning needs and their desire to practice skills. Also, faculty indicated that goal development provided more student engagement, direction, focus, and communication with nurse mentors.

My own clinical experiences consisted of a preconference, in which I was assigned patients, and a postconference, in which I discussed the care I provided throughout the day. I believe it would have been an even more positive experience to identify the goals for the clinical day prior to the rotation each week. I have always been a goal-oriented student, so to come across an article in the Journal of Nursing Education about integrated learning through goal development really resonated with me. I think many students have in mind what they would like to see or do before each clinical day, but they don’t always go that extra mile to verbalize it to the nurse mentor. I believe that the structured Clinical Goals Initiative model (Price et al., 2013) would be an asset to all nursing programs. I’m very thankful that I came across this article and will share it with the faculty of my university.

Reference

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