Enhancing Advanced Practice Nursing Students’ Verbal Patient Report Skills

Nurses use change of shift report in the clinical setting, but the method and format of a report differs when the advanced practice nursing (APN) student gives a verbal report to a preceptor in the clinical setting. This type of communication is not routinely taught in APN programs. However, this skill is important for APN students because the student’s patient presentation contributes to the preceptor’s assessment of the student’s clinical knowledge and performance.

Previously, APN students at the school of nursing have not been given instruction on this skill, and preceptors often express concerns about this gap in skills. Faculty at the school wanted to provide students with opportunities for the development of these communication skills within the distance learning environment. Therefore, to fill this gap, a virtual clinical conference was developed to provide detailed instruction and simulated practice performing verbal report with immediate instructor feedback. Simulated clinical experiences offer opportunities for APN students to learn in a nonthreatening environment and allow faculty to observe students’ baseline levels of ability and support successful role advancement (Keifenheim et al., 2015).

The goal of the virtual clinical conference was to provide a supportive environment for students to enhance their professional communication skills. The objectives of this exercise were for students to be able to (a) identify the differences between verbal report content of the nursing report and the APN report, (b) practice applying verbal report through a simulated patient encounter, (c) recognize strengths and weaknesses in verbal report skills and the need for improvement, and (d) transition the communication skills learned to future verbal reports.

Activity Description

A cohort of adult and geriatric primary care nurse practitioner students in their first month of clinical experience were divided into groups of eight students. Prior to the virtual conference, students were given information about preceptor expectations of verbal report, including guidelines for information to include in various patient situations (e.g., new patient, follow-up visit, problem visit, and specialty clinic visits).

Three days before the virtual clinical conference, each of the students was given a different written patient scenario to use to develop a simulated patient report. The patient scenarios contained important patient information along with details to distract students so they could learn to omit unnecessary material from their verbal report. It also included details about the patient’s physical examination that students were expected to sort through to include only pertinent findings in the verbal report.

During the virtual clinical conference, the instructor provided reinforcement about the importance of this skill. Students then gave their verbal report on their assigned patient scenario. The class members and instructor discussed the verbal report after each report was given. This provided an opportunity for students and faculty to practice giving and receiving peer feedback in a supportive environment. The virtual clinical conference lasted approximately 1 hour for each group of students.

This activity reflects the use of Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning theory and supports experience interpretation using self-reflection. More specifically, the activity causes students to reconsider their beliefs and habits through critical reflection in the context of dialogue with others.

Outcomes

After completing the activity, students were asked to volunteer their perspectives on the experience. Students praised the process and verbalized that it helped them appreciate expectations and identify what information was important to include to provide a clear and concise verbal report. Students also valued hearing other students’ techniques for giving a report.

Students’ preceptors were called approximately 2 to 4 weeks after completing this clinical conference to assess their thoughts on the students’ verbal report performance. The preceptors confirmed that the students’ verbal reports markedly improved after the instruction and practice. Overall, there was a positive response from both students and preceptors, suggesting that providing verbal report instructions, practice, and feedback for APN students improves student and preceptor communication as well as preceptors’ satisfaction with students’ clinical performance.

References


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