Using Contemporary Fiction to Integrate QSEN Competencies Into a Foundational Nursing Course

Quality and safety are integral components of fundamental nursing courses but often can be abstract and complex for students who have little or no clinical experience. The Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) competencies provide a framework for purposeful teaching of quality and safety throughout the nursing curriculum (Mohn-Brown, 2017). Using contemporary fiction, students can think and act as a nurse in a classroom environment. The Shift: One Nurse, Twelve Hours, Four Patients’ Lives (Brown, 2015) relates the story of a nurse as she cares for four patients during a single shift. The purpose of integrating this book into concepts coursework was to provide a collective experience for the identification and analysis of quality and safety practices in the clinical environment. Reading the book is assigned at the beginning of the semester, and students are provided with benchmark due dates for the reading assignment. In addition to using the book for context, examples, and discussion prompts, two simple QSEN activities were created.

Activity Description

The objective of the first assignment was for students to be able to identify the six QSEN competencies within the context of the patient care provided in the novel; the assignment was introduced after students had learned about each of the six QSEN competencies. For example, the safety prompts stated, “Describe a potential or actual patient safety situation in the novel and the actions (interventions) taken by a nurse to prevent or resolve the situation.”

The second assignment was a higher-level learning activity designed to culminate at the end of the semester. Students were expected to evaluate and prioritize patient problems relative to the concepts studied. Students completed a chart identifying each of the main patients, possible problems, supporting data, and priority level.

After individual decisions, students formed into groups to generate consensus. Each group visually documented the identified problems, priority decisions, and rationale for the class. Discussion ensued about prioritization with the goal of class consensus about patient priorities. Often, not everyone agreed, and students were required to articulate their rationale and thought processes.

Evaluation

Evaluation data were obtained from student evaluations of teaching and small group discussion. Overall, the students enjoyed the experience of reading a fiction novel and using it in class. One student expressed this sentiment by stating:

I had never been in the hospital setting before this semester. In clinical we only see things in real time. We don’t know what the nurse is thinking; we can only see what they are doing. We don’t have all the background. But in the book we can slow it down—we can’t do that in the hospital...and begin to analyze the actions in the situations.”

One student explained she enjoyed reading and “experiencing” the same clinical experience as other students because it allowed them to have the same information and come together to talk about how the situations were handled. The student noted that this type of experience was often missing in clinical because everyone has a different experience.

Overall, faculty reported a positive experience using contemporary literature in the classroom environment. Faculty noted assignments and conversation assisted in assessing students’ knowledge, application, and critical thinking differently than through a multiple-choice examination. However, faculty reported the assignments were time consuming to grade. The use of the novel in a foundation concepts class will be continued, and the assignments will be refined to improve outcomes and address faculty concerns.

The use of the novel had unintentional benefits across the curriculum. Other faculty began to incorporate contemporary fiction into their coursework. In addition, discussion about the novel led to an increased student and faculty focus on improving quality and safety in nursing care. As one student stated, “People make mistakes, she makes mistakes, the goal is how to improve.”

References


Danielle Walker, PhD, CNE, RN
d.k.walker@tcu.edu

Harris College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Texas Christian University

The author has disclosed no potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise.
doi:10.3928/01484834-20200520-12