Short Communication

Gaining Momentum Through Collaboration: Results of a Canadian Nursing Simulation Research Think Tank

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Abstract: A national think tank was convened to discuss themes, gaps and trends in nursing simulation research. A secondary objective of the think tank or 'thought incubator' was to explore areas of potential collaboration nationally. The PICK method was used to brainstorm during the three-phased meeting. All five researchers worked together to identify gaps in nursing simulation research that included faculty development strategies, psychological fidelity and virtual simulation. Opportunities for collaboration included: interprofessional simulation, multi-site studies and systematic reviews.

Cite this article:
Goldsworthy, S., Sears, K., Luctkar-Flude, M., Harder, N., & Wilson-Keates, B. (2018, February). Gaining momentum through collaboration: Results of a canadian nursing simulation research think tank. *Clinical Simulation in Nursing, 15*(C), 61-64. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecns.2017.09.001.

Background

In November 2015, a think tank of five Canadian simulation researchers was held at the University of Calgary to brainstorm and discuss current trends and gaps in simulation research. The group aimed to develop a strategic collaboration and platform to move the simulation research agenda forward in Canada on a national level. The group also planned for future directions in Canadian nursing simulation research. The *Canadian Nursing Simulation Research Collaboration* was created as a result of the Canadian Nursing Think Tank. This article describes the development of a national nursing research collaboration and illustrates the process used to identify knowledge gaps in healthcare simulation research relevant to pre-licensure and interprofessional education.

A total of five nurse researchers from four Canadian Universities met for an intensive one-day "think tank" session to share their perspectives and thoughts related to key trends, gaps, and potential future directions for

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simulation research. The five nurse researchers that participated all have part of their research programs focused on simulation research, with one researcher with a research program solely dedicated to simulation research. All researchers are PhD prepared, have similar educational and work backgrounds, and are experienced in the Joanna Briggs Institute systematic review methodologies. In addition, all five researchers hold full-time faculty appointments, lead research programs, and present and publish nationally and internationally.

> **Key Points**
> - A national simulation research think tank explored themes, gaps and trends in nursing simulation research.
> - Top research gaps that emerged included: faculty development, psychological fidelity and virtual simulation.
> - Opportunities for future simulation research collaboration included: interprofessional simulation, systematic reviews and multi-site studies.

The composition of this group was deliberate. With all researchers being familiar with the Joanna Briggs Institute review methodologies, this allowed for a structured and purposeful review of the existing literature. The review is not part of this article; however, it is important to identify this as a comprehensive review of the literature is an important first step in simulation research (Haerling & Prion, 2017). In 2016, major simulation journals published Reporting Guidelines for Simulation Research (Cheng et al., 2016). These guidelines recommended a format that is very familiar to doctoral prepared researchers. Although there are many nondoctoral prepared individuals conducting good simulation research, in order to move this agenda forward succinctly and adequately, we determined that researchers who were already doctoral prepared and had simulation as part of their program of research would expedite the work from this group.

The group also felt it was important to have a Canadian constituency to move the simulation agenda forward in Canada. Over the past decade, simulation for education of pre-licensure nursing students has grown significantly across the country, with some provinces providing substantial funding to nursing programs to develop simulation centres. Education and health are both provincially and federally funded, which is dissimilar to the private institutions in the United States. With the exception of the province of Québec, entry to practice for nursing is at the baccalaureate level, which again is dissimilar to the United States. Given these significant differences, having a Canadian research team was an important step as many researchers find that the Canadian context is often not well represented in current research. The researchers agreed that whereas some issues are experienced internationally, certain issues may be important nationally and need to be identified as such in order to be adequately addressed.

Objectives

The objectives for the one-day think tank session were as follows:

1. To articulate a clear, national voice related to the current state of simulation research in Canada and identify current key themes, trends, and gaps in nursing simulation research.
2. To develop a beginning action plan with timelines for each of the identified future research areas.
3. To address the challenges and build on the opportunities related to conducting simulation research through collaborative distance work.
4. To discuss potential national and international policy implications of the research areas identified.
5. To plan next steps after the think tank session.

Method

The think tank opened with introductions and a discussion of individual current research areas and thoughts around the trends, gaps, and areas requiring additional questions to be answered in the field of simulation research. A research coordinator and research assistant were present in the meeting in the role of raconteurs to capture the notes and themes from the meeting.

Once round table discussion had occurred about the current state of simulation and thoughts on the future of simulation, the group freely brainstormed ideas where systematic reviews and research studies were needed. After the ideas were placed on sticky notes, thematic analysis was conducted by way of a PICK chart to identify key areas of focus. A PICK chart is a Lean Six Sigma tool, developed by Lockheed Martin (George, 2006). PICK charts are a method to prioritize a multiple items or ideas. It permits a group to visually compare the items and focus on the optimal return on investment. By deciding where an idea falls on the PICK chart, four proposed project actions are provided: *P*ossible, *I*mplement, *C*hallenge, and *K*ill (thus the name *PICK*).

The PICK chart is a simple two by two table, which facilitated sticky notes to be placed in one of the four boxes: (a) topics that were easy to perform and had little pay off (*P*ossible), (b) topics that were easy to perform and had great payoff (*I*mplement), (c) those that were hard to do with great pay off (*C*hallenge), and (d) those that were hard to do with little payoff (*K*ill). When faced with multiple improvement ideas, a PICK chart may be used to determine the most useful. The group identified ten items in the easy to do and great pay off box (*I*mplement). They then prioritized these selected items and subsequently decided to focus on the top five knowledge gaps in simulation. The five gaps identified would benefit