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Featured Article

Integrating an Obesity Simulation into Baccalaureate Nursing Education

Kara Mangold, MS, RN-BC, CCTN^{a,*}, Katherine Markiewicz, MSN, RN, CHSE^b

^aAdjunct Faculty, Arizona State University; Unit Based Educator: Intermediate Care and Transplant, Instructor in Nursing, College of Medicine, Mayo Clinic Hospital, Phoenix AZ 85054, USA

^bAdjunct Faculty, Arizona State University; Nursing Education Specialist, Department of Clinical and Patient Education, Mayo Clinic Hospital, Phoenix AZ, 85054, USA

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Abstract: As obesity becomes more prevalent, it is vital that student nurses understand the impact of obesity and have the tools and resources necessary to provide comprehensive patient care. This article describes the use of an evolving case study that combines a problem-based learning approach with standardized patient simulation as a unique method for the delivery of obesity education in a baccalaureate nursing program. Learners apply theoretical knowledge to a clinical scenario, which can enhance the ability to manage complex clinical situations. This teaching strategy broadens the traditional classroom approach to encourage learning that goes beyond understanding content and additionally focuses on the development of problem-solving skills. Additionally, the educational format aided the students in understanding the chronic nature of obesity and the challenges, both physical and psychological, that patients face. A simulation storyboard is presented to outline the details of the simulation and align the simulation with learning objectives. Teaching-learning strategies and evaluation methods for each stage of the simulation are described.

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Obesity has become an epidemic, and the nursing profession must place a high priority on providing student nurses with the education needed to care for this complex patient population. In the United States, 35.7% of adults and 14.9% of children are classified as obese (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). Additionally, at least 2.8 million people die each year as a result of being

overweight or obese (World Health Organization, 2013). The high prevalence of obesity, combined with the complexity of its management, prompted the American Medical Association to recognize it as a disease in 2013 (AMA, 2013). It is vital that student nurses understand the impact of obesity and are equipped with the tools and resources necessary to provide comprehensive patient care; therefore, nursing faculty must integrate and emphasize specialized care for persons who are obese.

Integrating simulation into didactic nursing education about obesity is an ideal way to provide education about this

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* Corresponding author: mangold.kara@mayo.edu (K. Mangold).

complex issue. The curriculum for the nursing program at this university provides obesity education during the second semester of a four-semester baccalaureate nursing program as part of a 3-credit hour course, Nursing Concepts for Adult Health. During this course, students learn theoretical foundations for evidence-based nursing care of adult clients experiencing acute and chronic alterations in health. The course is designed to equip students with the ability to provide holistic care to patients with chronic illness, which includes psychosocial aspects of care such as stress, adaptation, environment, and culture. Patient-centered care that involves therapeutic communication and patient education are emphasized throughout the course.

Key Points

- Obesity is a complex topic that must be incorporated into nursing education.
- Integrating simulation into didactic nursing education about obesity is an ideal way to develop the skills needed to manage complex clinical situations.
- The description of a process used to incorporate obesity simulation provides a resource for others to implement similar education.

The course content focuses on the leading causes of morbidity and mortality for the adult population with emphasis on safe, competent, and compassionate care. In addition to the complex nature of obesity, many of the sequelae (e.g., heart failure and diabetes) are also addressed in the course. Weaving obesity into the dialog when topics such as heart failure and diabetes are discussed provides a more comprehensive understanding of this complex problem. A 3-hour block of time was dedicated to explore the obesity content. The obesity information was scheduled for the end of the course after students were prepared to integrate multiple issues into planning care of patients. This helped prepare the students for complex issues faced in clinical practice. A simulated clinical environment allowed the students to develop critical thinking skills, demonstrate prioritization skills, illustrate organizational skills, and practice nursing assessments and interventions in a safe setting.

The purpose of this article is to describe how the use of simulation broadens the traditional classroom approach for didactic education. The use of simulation encourages learning that goes beyond understanding content and focuses on the development of problem-solving skills. Practical tips and implementation tools are provided.

Instructor Simulation Preparation

Integration of simulation into the course was the result of didactic and simulation faculty members conferring to design an obesity simulation. Obesity's high prevalence,

along with the complex health care requirements of the disease and its multiple comorbidities make it an ideal subject to use for simulation. Nursing care of the patient with obesity must embrace a holistic approach that goes beyond nutrition and exercise counseling (Brown & Wimpenny, 2011). Since caring for patients with obesity requires ongoing nursing care and support, an evolving case-study approach was used to design the simulation to provide students with a learning experience that encompasses the complex nature of the disease and necessity of continuing care and support.

Problem-Based Learning in Simulation

A review of the literature guided the choice to use a problem-based learning format to design the simulation. Merging simulation with problem-based learning combines two well-known education strategies and actively engages the learners, embracing a student-centered learning approach (Murphy, Hartigan, Walshe, Flynn, & O'Brien, 2011). Problem-based learning is "the purposeful arrangement of the learning environment, supported with the proper educational tools, to facilitate a specific learning process" (Becker, Rose, Berg, Park, & Shatzer, 2006, p. 104). A simulation-based learning experience is "an array of structured activities that represent actual or potential situations in education and practice and allow participants to develop or enhance knowledge, skills, and attitudes or analyze and respond to realistic situations in a simulated environment or through an unfolding case study" (Meakim et al., 2013, p. S9).

Problem-based learning and simulation have been identified as effective educational strategies for nursing students as they encourage the integration of clinical concepts, promote problem solving, and better prepare students to manage the complex clinical situations they will experience in clinical practice (Walshe, O'Brien, Murphy, & Hartigan, 2013). Specifically, problem-based learning is understood to be beneficial within the health care professions as it provides students with the ability to better address the variety of unique life and health situations they will encounter (Wells, Warelow, & Jackson, 2009).

In recent years, students have experienced shortened clinical timeframes and limited exposure to diverse clinical settings, which has lent support to the use of problem-based learning in conjunction with simulation to provide for a purposeful arrangement of the learning environment (Becker et al., 2006; Murphy et al., 2011). Creating an active learning environment allows students to think aloud and generate knowledge, practice problem management, and experience critical situations in a controlled environment (Murphy et al., 2011). Additionally, the use of simulation provides an opportunity for realism in a safe and stable environment, allows for the design of learning experiences that may not be available in clinical settings, and makes possible the ability to provide a comprehensive

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