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Featured Article

Using Peer Study to Prepare for Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator Certification

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KEYWORDS

certification;
simulation;
peer study groups;
adult learning;
social constructivism

Abstract

Background: This article describes a peer study program implemented as preparation for taking the Society for Simulation in Healthcare Certification examination.

Methods: During the first 6 weeks participants reviewed articles, developed key points, related the readings to practice, and created practice test questions. Week 7 was a final review session.

Results: Six participants applied for the examination and all successfully passed the examination on the first attempt, being the first Certified Healthcare Simulation Educators in Kansas.

Conclusions: Participants reported improvement in the quality of simulation sessions, creation of a network of simulation educators, and an improvement in test writing skills.

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In 2011, the Society for Simulation in Healthcare (2015) developed a certification program for educators focused on health care simulation. Although SSH provides a blueprint and suggested materials for individual study, educators in the Wichita, Kansas region discussed the possibility and the value of group study for the certification examination. Although the literature supports group work (“Certification test prep: Top 10 review tips,” 2014; Falker, 2014), the intent of this 7-week group study program was not only to offer group preparation for the certification

examination but also to create an ongoing community of interprofessional learners.

Background

The literature suggests that although the value may be personal or professional, certification is generally thought to be an indicator or recognition of the specialized knowledge, skills, and experience held by an individual (Fitzpatrick, 2012; Haskins, Hnatiuk, & Yoder, 2011; Schroeter, 2015). Furthermore, as professional organizations have the responsibility to establish and set standards for practice, certification is the one approach that is used to validate the

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knowledge and skills that support those standards (Benson, 1991; Falker, 2014). Thus, the value of specialized health care certification may have benefits to employers, individual practitioners, and the public.

Key Points

- A peer study group was an effective method for examination preparation.
- Participants reported changing their simulation practices based on the readings and the associated discussions.
- A network of local simulation experts formed to share their expertise and support with others.

- Engage in scholarly activities

To be eligible for certification, Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator (CHSE), the candidate must have 2 years of simulation experience in health care education, research or administration; a minimum of a bachelor's degree; and three letters of recommendation. To achieve certification, the candidate must successfully pass the SSH certification examination (Society for Simulation in Healthcare, 2015).

Study Material Available

SSH (2015) has released several supporting documents to help applicants prepare for the certification examination. These are available on the SSH Web site. The examination blueprint describes the major content areas and the examination weights assigned to each area. SSH has released two lists of references that applicants can review before the examination: Examination Preparation References and Simulation References. The Examination Preparation References consist of 34 references described as core articles which were used as a source material for the questions on the examination. A year later, the SSH Education Committee released Simulation References, a list of 97 references, to provide additional resources on health care simulation topics. An additional practice examination consisting of 30 questions has since been released. Furthermore, realizing that adult learners prefer different learning environments and modalities, SSH has released 4- and 8-hour CHSE Prep Workshops. These workshops are available at

conferences and individual simulation centers throughout the United States.

Guiding Framework

As the learners and teachers in the Wichita region began planning the interprofessional group study program, multiple learning theories were evaluated and considered to guide the curriculum. Two learning theories were selected: Knowles' Theory of Andragogy and Vygotsky's Social Constructivism (Holton, Knowles, & Swanson, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978).

Social Constructivism

According to Vygotsky, social interaction contributes to the process of cognitive development. Vygotsky proposed that learning is not simply an assimilation of new knowledge but also rather a product of social interactions that integrate learners into a community of knowledge. In this program, learners not only acquired new knowledge but through collaboration helped each other to construct meaningful learning experiences (Holton et al., 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, this theory was considered foundational for guiding the group study program and for further establishing the community of learning.

Knowles (Andragogy)

Knowles' theory of Andragogy specifies six assumptions about how adults learn. These six assumptions were incorporated into the study group process. The first assumption is that as learners mature, they become more self-directed. Second, as adult learners are self-directed, they will develop their own learning experiences. Third, adult learners desire immediate applicability. Fourth, adult learners become more problem centered rather than subject centered. Fifth, it is assumed that the participants will be internally motivated to participate in this course because they have chosen to attend. Finally, adult learners need to know why they need to learn something. (Holton et al., 2005; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2012; Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy, 2011). In our study group method, all six of these principles were incorporated.

Methods

During the summer of 2013, eight faculty and staff members from multiple educational institutions in the Wichita region chose to create a group study program for the CHSE certification examination. These faculty and staff members came from public 4-year research institutions, community colleges, and private 4-year educational institution. As a group, we agreed to achieve the following goals:

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