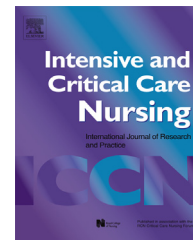




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Evaluation of postgraduate critical care nursing students' attitudes to, and engagement with, Team-Based Learning: A descriptive study



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KEYWORDS

Critical care nursing;
Intensive care
nursing;
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education;
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Teamwork;
Team-Based Learning

Summary

Objective: The aim of this study was to evaluate postgraduate critical care nursing students' attitudes to, and engagement with, Team-Based Learning (TBL).

Research methodology/design: A descriptive pre and post interventional design was used. Study data were collected by surveys and observation.

Setting: University postgraduate critical care nursing programme.

Main outcome measures: Students' attitudes to learning within teams (Team Experience Questionnaire) and student engagement (observed and self-reports).

Results: Twenty-eight of 32 students agreed to participate (87% response rate). There were significant changes in students' attitudes to learning within teams including increases in overall satisfaction with team experience, team impact on quality of learning, team impact on clinical reasoning ability and professional development. There was no significant increase in satisfaction with peer evaluation. Observation and survey results showed higher student engagement in TBL classes compared with standard lecturing.

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Conclusion: Postgraduate critical care nursing students responded positively to the introduction of TBL and showed increased engagement with learning. In turn, these factors enhanced nurses' professional skills in teamwork, communication, problem solving and higher order critical thinking. Developing professional skills and advancing knowledge should be core to all critical care nursing education programmes to improve the quality and safety of patient care.

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Implications for Clinical Practice

- Team-Based Learning improves nurses' teamwork and communication skills which are vital for safe, high quality clinical practice.
- Team-Based Learning is an educational strategy that improve nurses' clinical reasoning and problem solving skills.
- Team-Based Learning improves nurses' skills and confidence in advocating patient care strategies; hence, indicating its relevance towards improving professional clinical practice.

Introduction

In Australia, the educational preparation of specialist critical care nurses requires registered nurses to complete postgraduate studies in a partnership model between universities and hospitals (Aitken et al., 2008). Postgraduate critical care qualifications are completed over one to two years, with the university delivering theoretical content while nurses are concurrently employed in hospitals and supported by hospital employed clinical nurse educators. This model allows the acquisition of increasingly complex knowledge and skills over time and the ongoing development of professional practice responsibilities.

However, a shortage of qualified and experienced critical care nurses globally, and increasing patient acuity, have resulted in postgraduate critical care student nurses with increased responsibilities for highly unstable patients with reduced clinical support and supervision from specialist experienced colleagues (Australian Health Workforce Advisory Committee, 2002, Stechmiller, 2002). This context of care requires nurses to have advanced problem solving and critical thinking skills very early in their clinical practice, along with a depth of knowledge related to their specialisation. Indeed, today's clinical environment has become one of performance rather than learning in part due to the short lengths of stay and high patient acuity (Health Workforce Australia, 2013). Further, nurses require advanced teamwork and communication skills to negotiate best outcomes for patients (Australian College of Critical Care Nurses (ACCCN), 2006, World Federation of Critical Care Nurses, 2005). Although these latter skills are rarely taught, they have been identified as essential for safe, high quality patient care globally (Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC), 2010, 2011; World Health Organisation, 2011). Teamwork and communication skills are particularly vital because clinicians from various disciplines have individual priorities and understandings; but ultimately, nurses are left to negotiate and provide care (Rider and Brashers, 2006; Zimmerman et al., 2011). Thus, there is an imperative for postgraduate nurses to acquire these skills during their critical care education.

Most educational strategies in nursing aim to increase students' factual knowledge with the assumption that this will improve problem solving, clinical judgement and clinical practice (Daly, 2001). By contrast, an educational strategy that taught problem solving, critical thinking and teamwork skills so that students' clinical practice would be enhanced was sought by the research team. As a strategy to accelerate the acquisition of higher order critical thinking and problem solving skills by nurses and embed teamwork and communication skills while learning cognate knowledge, Team-Based Learning (Michaelsen et al., 2008) was introduced into two postgraduate specialist critical care programmes at an Australian university during the second half of 2009.

The first positive impact of Team-Based Learning (TBL) on student learning was shown in business students during the 1980s (Michaelsen and Schultheiss, 1989, Michaelsen et al., 1982, Michaelsen et al., 1984) by the creator and founder of TBL, Larry Michaelsen. Subsequent adoption by medical schools in particular led to much published research about TBL as an innovative teaching strategy that promoted high level student engagement and produced significantly improved student learning outcomes (Chung et al., 2009; Hunt et al., 2003; Koles et al., 2010; Levine et al., 2004; Levine et al., 2007; Parmelee et al., 2009). More recently, programmes in pharmacy (Nelson et al., 2013; Norose et al., 2014; Ramsauer, 2011) have supported the use of TBL as an educational strategy to improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

The only published research in nursing students prior to the study reported in this paper were in undergraduate baccalaureate programmes in the USA. Using observation and interviews, Feingold and colleagues (2008) found TBL promoted student-to-student engagement. Similarly Clark and colleagues (2008) found TBL enhanced student engagement and was an effective educational strategy for large groups of students. A recent study conducted by Cheng and colleagues (2014) showed TBL significantly increased student engagement in the classroom, the value placed on teams, self-directed learning and academic performance in an 18-week maternal-child nursing programme. In an

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