



Featured Article

# Exploration Into How Simulation Can Effect New Graduate Transition

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## KEYWORDS

transition into practice;  
simulation;  
reflection;  
critiquing;  
debriefing;  
independent practice

## Abstract

**Background:** Transition into the professional role can be difficult for new graduate nurses. The level of responsibility changes immediately on licensure. Simulation experiences may assist with this transition.

**Method:** A descriptive phenomenological methodology was used to explore how simulation affected practice of new graduate nurses.

**Result:** Six themes emerged: confidence, communication, critiquing, theory to practice integration, seeing the big picture of patient care, and responsibility for independent practice.

**Conclusion:** Although transition into the profession is influenced by many factors, simulation experiences that support student confidence, communication skills, reflection, and decision making can help new graduate transition into the professional role and its responsibilities.

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When taking on the professional role of nurse, new graduate nurses experience transition shock (Duchscher, 2009). Preparing nursing students for the transition from learner to professional has been a difficult endeavor for schools of nursing. Constraints placed on student experiences by safety concerns, faculty-to-student ratio, and clinical placements limit the type and level of experiences, responsibility, and accountability students are given. The complexity of nursing skill and decision making continues to escalate and requires both autonomy and

interprofessional talents to deliver holistic, safe care. New graduate nurses are challenged by delegation, prioritization, management of patient care, independent decision making, collaboration with other disciplines, and giving and receiving feedback for improved practice (Benner, Tanner, & Chesla, 2009b; Kramer, 1974). Simulation-based education (SBE) during academic courses may be one way to bridge undergraduate education challenges and growing expectations for new graduate nurses.

## Literature Review

Transition shock is the negative experience of suddenly shifting from the known student role to the less familiar role

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of professional nurse. The shock of this role transition for the new graduate is the difference between the relationships, roles, responsibilities, knowledge, and performance expectations of the previous academic environment to those now required in the professional practice setting (Duchscher, 2009). This transition can be abrupt, overwhelming, and filled with mixed emotions for new graduate nurses. Duchscher (2009) found that transition shock affected new graduates physically, emotionally, sociodevelopmentally, and intellectually.

### Key Points

- Transition into practice is difficult for new graduate RNs, and simulation experiences may help.
- New graduates used simulation experiences to assist with transition into the professional role and continued to implement debriefing for continued growth.
- Further research is needed on how simulation can fill the gaps left from school clinical experiences to help prepare students for professional practice.

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing study helped to highlight the value of SBE for students as they transition into the professional practice role. The study compared three cohorts from a national pool of students during school and six months after graduation (Hayden, Smiley, Alexander, Kardong-Edgren, & Jeffries, 2014). The three comparison cohorts had 10% or less, 25%, and 50% of clinical experiences replaced with

SBE. No significant differences were noted between groups in overall clinical competency and readiness for practice. However, statistically significant differences in submeasures of clinical knowledge and critical thinking based on preceptor/manager ratings and self-reported feelings of readiness for practice of new graduates were identified. Six-week postgraduation ratings of clinical knowledge for groups who had 25% and 50% simulation were rated significantly higher ( $p = .017$ ) in the area of clinical knowledge than the control group (10% or less simulation). Critical thinking ratings for the 25% group at six weeks were also significantly higher ( $p = .037$ ). All new graduates in the three comparison groups did not feel prepared for practice and rated their clinical knowledge low after graduation. However, findings related to the Global Assessment of Readiness for Practice for the 50% simulation group reported higher levels of feeling prepared for practice compared with their study peers ( $p = .033$ ) six months after graduation (Hayden et al., 2014).

Kumaran and Carney (2014) identified that new graduates experience feelings of stress, fear, and lack of organization. Participants felt ignored and invisible as students then surprised at the sudden change in attitude toward them from other health care providers (HCPs) (physicians, respiratory therapist, social workers, etc.). McCalla-Graham and De Gaghe (2015) found that new graduates

believed school provided basic knowledge of care but did not prepare them to function effectively in the acute care environment. Participants suggested that including worst-case scenarios as part of their clinical experience in school would have helped them acquire the needed knowledge and skills to function effectively and safely in the practice setting. High-fidelity SBE could fill gaps in skills related to interprofessional collaboration, responsibility, and support that may be limited during school clinical experiences. SBE can supplement clinical experiences to provide encounters that new graduates can draw on as they transition into the professional role of RN.

In a review of simulation literature, Weaver (2011) noted that high-fidelity SBE benefits nursing students in terms of knowledge, value, and realism. However, the author identified a need for studies that investigate the transfer of knowledge from SBE during school as students transition into the role of professional nurse.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover what aspects of high-fidelity SBE supported undergraduate alumni as they transitioned into the practice role of nursing. The research questions included (a) how did the simulation course/method affect practice as a new graduate and (b) how did simulation affect growth as a new nurse?

### Method

A descriptive phenomenological approach was used for this study to explore what aspects of SBE affected practice as a new graduate nurse. University institutional review board approval was obtained. Informed consent that included the study purpose, procedure, risks, and benefits was acquired from each participant. A descriptive phenomenology method, as outlined by Colaizzi (1978), was used to investigate the structures of consciousness in the lived experience of new graduates who used SBE as a learning method during nursing school. By describing the everyday lived experience, one can capture its meaning by identifying essential themes. The phenomenological framework is founded on the assumption that individuals assign meaning to their world through conscious reflection on situations and events (Creswell, 2012).

A seven-step phenomenological approach, as outlined by Colaizzi (1978), was used to analyze the study data by the one researcher. The steps included the following: (a) reading each participant's accounts several times to achieve an understanding of their descriptions and lived experiences; (b) each individual transcript was then reread and phrases that directly relate to how SBE could affect transition into the role of RN were identified; (c) the researcher carefully considered participant statements and identified

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