Featured Article

Design and Implementation of an Interprofessional Death Notification Simulation

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Abstract
Background: The very nature of death notification is emotionally laden and requires evidence-based caring and supportive interventions, involving an interprofessional team approach. This article describes the development and implementation of an interprofessional death notification simulation involving nursing and social work students.
Method: Interprofessional teamwork and the death notification process were considered in student responses to a facilitator created descriptive post-simulation survey.
Results: Student comments include increased confidence, decreased anxiety, and increased awareness of the resources required in the death notification process. Student comments also included greater understanding of each discipline's role and the importance of working as a team.
Conclusion: These results provide a framework that could be utilized to enhance interdisciplinary education through the use of simulation, while also enhancing students' knowledge and understanding of how to deliver a death notification based on best practices.

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The very nature of death notification is emotionally laden and requires evidence-based, supportive interventions. This article describes the development and implementation of

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an interprofessional death notification simulation for nursing and social work students at a Midwestern University. Because of the recent merging of multiple health disciplines at this university, there was a need to offer opportunities for increased interprofessional learning. This was also congruent with the identified national need for interprofessional learning (Interprofessional Education Collaborative Expert Panel, 2011). In the clinical setting, students are not easily afforded the opportunity to work as an interprofessional team or care for family members after a death notification. The simulation was created as a means to provide students with an opportunity to participate in these valuable experiences. Student responses to a facilitator created descriptive post simulation survey and post simulation debriefing emphasized interprofessional teamwork and the death notification processes.

Key Points

- We created this simulation to provide students with an opportunity to work as an interprofessional team and care for family members after a death notification.
- Interprofessional education for healthcare providers offers a number of benefits, including enhanced communication and collaboration, because it provides students an opportunity to work together as a team to achieve a common goal.
- Psychological fidelity is the emotional stress that participants experience in simulation and is a form of experiential learning that includes psychological stressors and a context in which students can learn.

Review of Literature

Interprofessional Education

Interprofessional education occurs, "When students from two or more professions learn about, from and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes" (World Health Organization, 2010, p.7). Interprofessional education for healthcare providers offers a number of benefits, including enhanced communication and collaboration, as it provides students an opportunity to work together as a team to achieve a common goal (Robertson & Bandali, 2008; Van Soeren, Macmillan, Cop, Kenaszchuk, & Reeves, 2009). Traditionally, healthcare students have been educated in isolation of one another and had minimal exposure to interprofessional learning opportunities, in part owing to the specific curriculum guidelines of each discipline (Masters, O'Toole Baker, & Jodon, 2012; McIlwaine, Scarlett, Venters, & Ker, 2007; Robertson & Bandali, 2008). Throughout the student's education, professional socialization occurs, which affects their attitudes toward working as an interprofessional team (Dillon, Noble, & Kaplan, 2009). Students are expected to work as part of a collaborative healthcare team upon graduation, but have limited education on the roles of other healthcare professionals.

Through interprofessional education, students have a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of other disciplines. Interprofessional education goes beyond placing students from various disciplines in a classroom. Effective interprofessional education revolves around an interactive learning approach that allows for members of each profession to interact with one another (Reeves, Zwarenstein, Goldman, Barr, Freeth, Koppel, & Hammick, 2010). There has been an increased interest in the use of simulation as a means of interprofessional education. Zhang, Thompson, and Miller (2011) found that student satisfaction and perception of learning are high when students are engaged in interprofessional simulated activities. These authors stressed the need for further research for measuring the effectiveness of simulation-based interprofessional education.

Simulation

Simulation has been increasing in popularity as a teaching strategy that provides active engagement of learners (Galloway, 2009). Fidelity refers to the extent that a simulated experience mimics reality, a number of factors contribute to fidelity and include physical, psychological, and social factors (INACSL Board of Directors, 2011). For the purpose of this simulation, psychological realism was a critical element to enhance the fidelity or realism of a simulated patient death. Psychological fidelity is the emotional stress that participants experience in simulation (DeMaria, O'Bryson, Mooney, Silverstein, Reich, Bodian, & Levine, 2010) and is a form of experiential learning that includes psychological stressors and a context in which students can learn. This attends to the affective component of learning (Dornan, Scherpbier, & Boshuizen, 2009). Standardized patients are individuals who play the role of the patient, or the roles can be developed for a group of standardized patients playing a family (Onori, Pampaloni, & Multak, 2012). The use of standardized patients adds to the psychological fidelity of a simulation involving a patient death, which is emotionally laden. Standardized patient programs have been common in health professional education for decades and have been used to teach a variety of skills and concepts (Ebbert & Connors, 2004; Hill, Davidson, & Theodoros, 2010; Ryan, Walshe, Gaffney, Shanks, Burgoyne, & Wiskin, 2010). Although traditionally used in medical education to teach communication and clinical skills, standardized patients are increasingly used in other health professions such as nursing, pharmacy, and speech pathology (Hill et al., 2010; Marken, Zimmerman, Kennedy, Schremmer, & Smith, 2010). Most programs that use