

## Review

## Near-peer teaching in undergraduate nurse education: An integrative review ☆, ☆ ☆

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## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Near-peer teaching  
Undergraduate  
Nursing student  
Integrative review  
Educational psychology

## ABSTRACT

**Introduction/Background:** Studies in peer learning and teaching reported in the nursing literature are mainly descriptive, summarising positive aspects using survey and interviews. Application of pedagogical approaches to near-peer teaching in undergraduate nursing, using educational psychology frameworks to explain the outcomes, is relatively unknown.

**Objectives:** The objective of this integrative review was to ascertain outcomes of near-peer teaching in undergraduate nurse education and theoretical frameworks used to explain outcomes of near-peer teaching.

**Design:** Included qualitative and quantitative studies.

**Method:** The review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA protocol and Joanna Briggs Institute processes and included studies published between the years 1990 and 2017. Quality appraisal involved two independent reviewers analysing the data, and narrative synthesis was used to report results.

**Results:** Two hundred and twenty-one abstracts were assessed independently by two reviewers for relevance to near-peer teaching in undergraduate nurse education, 29 articles selected for further review with 10 meeting the inclusion criteria.

Benefits of near-peer teaching were reported as creating a safe supportive learning environment, learners viewing near-peer teachers as effective role models and increased confidence experienced by learner and teacher. Studies focused mainly on cognition in relation to performance with little emphasis on metacognition or affective behaviours, highlighting the need for more studies to provide definitive evidence supporting this pedagogical approach and framing its implementation around theories, particularly from educational psychology.

**Conclusion:** Lack of training provided to near-peer teachers highlighted that it is imperative that faculty embed near-peer teaching into the curriculum. To develop this educational intervention, studies in near-peer teaching are required to assess affective behaviours and metacognitive qualities of near-peer teachers to determine how this educational intervention can impact learning and performance of both the learner and near-peer teacher.

## 1. Introduction/Background

Teaching is an important role expected of newly-graduated nurses. This expectation is included in the Standards for Practice for Registered Nurses (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, 2016) which state that ‘a Registered Nurse is responsible for their professional development and contribute to the development of others’ (Nursing and

Midwifery Board of Australia, 2016, p. 3) and further state that Registered Nurses are to partake in patient education as part of their roles (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, 2016). This expectation of newly-practising Registered Nurses can add to the many challenges endured as they transition and practise in the clinical setting (Missen et al., 2016a; Missen et al., 2016b). In fact, newly registered nurses are known to be overwhelmed by the new responsibilities in the clinical

☆ Acknowledgements: Nil.

☆☆ This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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setting due to lack of experience and confidence in decision making (Kumaran and Carney, 2014), coupled with added responsibility of teaching peers, students and patients once they graduate.

Few studies have been conducted that report on peer teaching embedded into the nursing curriculum. McKenna and French (2011) reported a formal process whereby a core teaching unit/subject was embedded into the curriculum in the final year of an undergraduate nursing degree. The content included theories of learning and a near-peer teaching session where third year students created a session plan and delivered a teaching session to first year students. However, studies on peer learning and teaching reported in the nursing literature are mainly descriptive, summarising positive aspects, such as student satisfaction, using surveys and interviews (McKenna and French, 2011; Williams et al., 2013).

For some time, studies in educational psychology literature have highlighted the importance of examining various domains of learning, including cognition, metacognition and affective behaviours (Cantwell and Moore, 1996; St George et al., 2012; Ten Cate et al., 2004; Topping, 2005), given the interaction of cognition, metacognition and affective behaviours is known to impact learning and performance. Yet, the focus and outcomes of near-peer teaching in undergraduate nurse education using educational psychology frameworks to explain the outcomes is relatively unknown. The aim of the integrative review was to ascertain outcomes of near-peer teaching in undergraduate nurse education and to understand underpinning theoretical frameworks used to explain study context and outcomes. The following research questions were used in this review:

- What are the outcomes associated with near-peer teaching in undergraduate nurse education?
- What theoretical frameworks are used to provide context and support findings of near-peer teaching?

## 2. Methods

This integrative review included review of both qualitative and quantitative studies and conducted in accordance with the PRISMA review (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis) protocol (Moher et al., 2009). Due to different methodological quality, interventions and learning outcomes of the retrieved studies, meta-analysis was not possible. Therefore, narrative synthesis was used to report results.

This integrative review was conducted in three stages: 1) development of analysis strategies with inclusion and exclusion criteria; 2) quality and critical appraisal, selection of studies and data extraction; and 3) aggregation of data and synthesis of findings. A comprehensive search of databases and grey literature was conducted for papers published between 1990 and 2017, using inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined in Table 1.

In the initial search, and as highlighted in previous studies, terminology around near-peer teaching was found to be confusing (Irvine

**Table 1**  
Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Quantitative and qualitative studies of NPT in undergraduate nurse education Research articles published after 1990	Articles not published in English Studies involving postgraduate students Studies published prior to 1990 Study results duplicated in separate earlier publications Descriptive article or editorial Peer review, peer assessment, peer group and peer mentoring Studies not defined as NPT

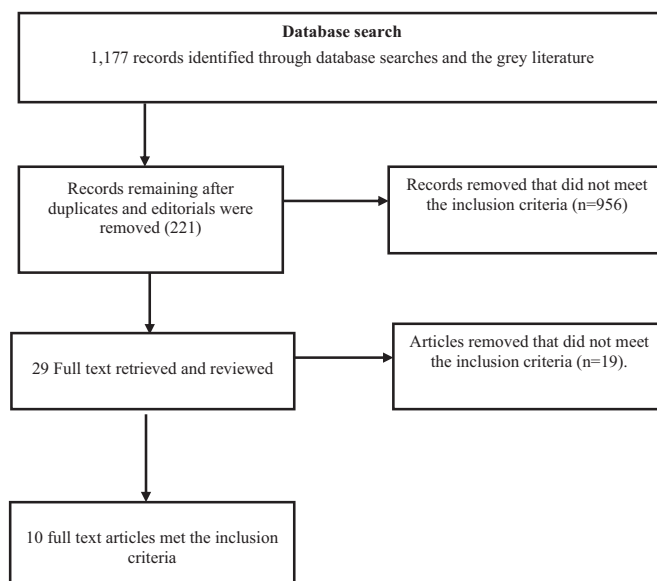


Fig. 1. PRISMA identification and screening process.

et al., 2017; Ladyshevsky, 2000; Secomb, 2008) and a confounding factor in the selection process with the interchangeable language used to describe near-peer teaching. To prevent studies being overlooked, the search was broadened to include ‘peer’ and not just ‘near-peer’. The terms included “Peer teach\*”, OR “peer learn\*” OR “near-peer” OR “peer tutor\*” OR “peer assisted learning” OR “supplementary instruction” OR “cooperative learning” AND “student nurs\*” or “nurs\* undergraduate”, OR baccalaureate\* OR tertiary OR undergrad\* OR “undergraduate education”.

The primary databases used in the search were electronic databases, CINAHL, Medline, EMBASE, Proquest and PubMed. MeSH terms and adjacent proximity searching were used to retrieve words that were within three words of each other. Snowballing, identifying potential articles from references of selected studies, was conducted to locate further studies that might not have emerged in the database search. A search library was created by downloading all citations and abstracts into EndNote x6, a bibliography management program.

The selection process is described using the PRISMA flow diagram in Fig. 1 (Moher et al., 2009). Once duplicates were removed 1117 articles remained and following an initial assessment of the titles and abstracts, 221 records remained.

### 2.1. Quality Appraisal

Two hundred and twenty-one abstracts were assessed independently by two reviewers for relevance to near peer teaching in undergraduate nurse education, leaving 29 articles for further detailed review. After reviewing the 29 full-text articles, only 10 met the inclusion criteria (Table 2). During the two-staged process, discrepancies occurring primarily because of lack of clear definition of near-peer teaching in judgement between the two reviewers were resolved through discussion. The 10 relevant articles were critically appraised independently by the reviewers using critical appraisal tools developed by the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) (2014): Qualitative Assessment and Review Instrument (QARI) and Meta-Analysis of Statistics Assessment and Review Instrument (MAStARI).

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Summary of Included Studies

Studies were conducted in six different countries, namely USA

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