

Project Title

Experiential Learning Programme for Pre-Nursing-Training Students

Project Lead and Members

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Project members: George Glass (Developer, Experiential Learning Programme)

Organisation(s) Involved

- Tan Tock Seng Hospital Nursing Recruitment and Operations Business Strategy Team (ROBUST)
- Tan Tock Seng Hospital Pre-Professional Education Office
- Tan Tock Seng Hospital Medical Education Office
- Tan Tock Seng Hospital Human Resources

Project Period

Start date: June - 2015

Completed date: Ongoing (Runs annually to coincide with Hospital Attachment Programmes)

Aims

To develop an experiential learning programme allowing non-tertiary students to better understand the needs of patients and the science behind nursing care delivery.

To improve participants' understanding of the role of nurses. To attract participants into joining the nursing profession.

Background

Experiential learning was espoused by the Ministry of Education to inculcate critical thinking. This concept has been fundamental in nurse education, translating their theoretical knowledge into real-life clinical application, facilitating the development of

critical-thinking practitioners. Until 2015, healthcare exposure programmes to students interested in a career in healthcare have yet to capitalise on this model of teaching. Instead, traditional didactic methods of education such as lectures and ‘job shadowing’ are used. However, focus group feedback with students highlighted that they have been unable to effectively absorb information when they are shuttled from one clinic or ward to another with limited explanation or exposure to the rationale behind the actions they see. As part of the Ministry of Health’s increased focus in attracting young Singaporeans to the nursing and allied health professions, a new engagement strategy is required to garner increased awareness and interest towards these career opportunities.

Methods

The experiential learning programme was first introduced in June 2015. It is based around introducing non-tertiary students (e.g. Junior College or Secondary School students) to the qualities and the nature of a career in nursing. This was achieved through hands-on activities facilitated by nurses to relate the students’ theoretical knowledge and experiences in school to clinical activities. An example of this was teaching students nasogastric intubation and the nurse-led protocol to confirm its placement, using strips of pH paper to confirm its location in the stomach. Hence, students can relate the science behind such nursing interventions to their own knowledge learnt in Chemistry and Biology as well.

While conducted in a simulated environment, the use of real equipment and real-life clinical scenarios are aimed towards establishing psychological fidelity, immersing participants in the situation to learn effectively. An example of this was the usage of an information overload scenario when having participants prepare and administer medications to 4 patients, producing multiple new pieces of information that could affect their assessment of the situation and to provide greater understanding on the critical thinking and need for information prioritization as a nurse.

Further reflection opportunities were facilitated after each activity by nurses to allow reflection on how the activities performed provided benefits to patient care based on

their clinical environment. This enabled students to assimilate their learning, comprehend the rationale for clinical actions and internalise the lessons learnt. There have been over 7 runs of the experiential learning programme to date, with continuous refinements to the programme. It has now evolved to include clinical scenarios such as the management of patients with an acute asthma attack. In addition, it has been adapted for the delivery of multi-disciplinary scenario-based learning, such as nurses and Occupational Therapists to cover discharge planning considerations, combining a home assessment for wheelchair suitability and medication education.

Results

To date, over 214 participants have been trained using the experiential learning approach to gain a better understanding of nursing.

Feedback has consistently been positive from participants, with consistent reporting that the use of such hands-on learning combined with reflection and relation to real-world clinical practice allowed them to gain a better understanding of the rationale and understanding behind common interventions led by nurses such as nasogastric care and respiratory care. This approach has since been shared to various interested partners, from schools to MOHH. The project team has since partnered with MOHH in the delivery of experiential learning as part of the preparation of potential healthcare scholars, using the simulations to allow them to better understand the rationale behind care delivery by nurses before they commence their 2-day shadowing of the clinical areas.

In addition, the experiential learning scenarios have been further developed to provide scenario-based skills training for student nurses in the hospital, covering areas from resuscitation to detection of a deteriorating patient and first-line interventions.

Personal follow-up with over 30 participants who individually reached out to us for further engagement in our other immersion and mentorship programmes demonstrated that all 30 have since entered nursing training at various institutions in Singapore.

Lessons Learnt

Following the completion of the first run of the experiential learning programme, we identified the need for a “follow-up”, in particular immersion into the clinical area to allow participants to see how the interventions they learnt are applied in clinical. This led to immersion in acute clinical areas so that participants could observe the interventions they learnt during the experiential learning being applied in clinical practice by the nurses. In particular, nurses who delivered the experiential learning session would host and supervise students within their own ward, using the opportunity to show the clinical interventions within their own environment. For example, a nurse from a respiratory medicine who covered the experiential learning segment on asthma management would then host the students in his ward to examine the asthma treatment regimen being applied in real life. 120 of the participants who engaged in the experiential learning were able to benefit from this updated approach. These participants shared that through this, they were able to better integrate their understanding of the hands-on simulation to real-life care delivery.

Conclusion

Experiential learning is an effective method to teach individuals without exposure in Nursing about the nature and rationale of Nursing, helping individuals keen on exploring more about the profession, allowing them to understand “Why we do what we do”.

Additional Information

Participants’ continued interest and engagement with the ROBUST team following their experiential learning led to them joining the newly-formed clinical internship programme (Now termed as Healthcare Assistant Trainee Programme) to better understand the Nursing profession. Many of them volunteered to assist ROBUST in the delivery of subsequent experiential learning sessions, sharing their own experiences as clinical interns and subsequently as nursing students.

Project Category

New Pedagogy

Keywords

Healthcare Training & Education, New Pedagogy, Experiential Learning, Nursing, Tan
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Project Attachment

Photographs of activities.



