

TEACHING LEADERSHIP SKILLS THROUGH EVIDENCE USING A MENTORING TRIAD

Research related to preceptors and mentors explores student/teacher relationships and demonstrates an increase in leadership and critical thinking skills. For many years, leadership has been emphasized as an essential component of baccalaureate nursing education, but is often focused on later in the curriculum. Increased attention is being given to early introduction of leadership skills that are applicable at the bedside. Based on a successful pilot, a research study was conducted that combined the elements of mentored learning, leadership skill education, and critical thinking enhancement.

Methods:

Mentoring triads consisting of a student, a staff nurse mentor, and a faculty member provide the framework for the study. Aims of the research were: 1) compare the leadership skills and critical thinking skills of nursing students receiving a mentoring experience with students who do not receive the experience, 2) explore the perceptions of the nursing students and clinical staff, participating in the research. The study followed 16 mentored and 16 control students through two semesters of a five semester program. The faculty member worked closely with each triad. Each student's clinical experience is supervised by a given mentor for an entire semester. Mentors and mentees are oriented to the mentoring triad and leadership elements which are applicable to bedside nursing. During the semester, the leadership elements are discussed and accompanying worksheets are completed by the students and their mentors. All thirty-two students were pre- and post-tested for critical thinking skills and leadership qualities using standardized tests. Qualitative data was also collected from mentees and mentors.

Findings:

Statistical findings comparing leadership qualities and critical thinking skills will be analyzed after the final testing in April, 2005. As of date, qualitative comments are extremely positive about the mentoring and leadership aspects of the project from the mentors and the service institutions, as well as the students.