

## ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS PRIOR TO GRADUATION

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**Purposes/Aims:** Determine the perceptions of two groups of baccalaureate nursing students immediately prior to graduation regarding early enrichment activities: 1) patient case discussions in a classroom setting and 2) performing nursing actions for the patient cases using a Human Patient Simulator (HPS).

**Rationale/Conceptual Basis/ Background:** Nurse educators explore methods to facilitate development of critical thinking skills, problem solving, and prioritization. Use of human patient simulators and case study discussions and are two methodologies which allow students to learn in a safe environment. It is important to evaluate students' perceptions regarding learning outcomes of these learning experiences.

**Methods:** Institutional review board approval and informed consent were obtained. The twenty-five students involved in the original study (1) were invited to participate in a group interview near the end of their last semester of nursing school. Four group interviews were conducted and audio taped. The data were transcribed and analyzed line by line using content analysis. Themes and patterns were identified.

**Results:** Themes included development of critical thinking skills, enhanced ability to care for patient in the clinical setting, and improved ability to establish priorities. Students identified the value of a faculty expert to guide them through the learning process, the importance of learning from each other in a group learning experience, and increased confidence in the clinical setting. Data bits demonstrate perceptions about the enrichment activities and the educational value: *"...it just helped me to see how to pull things all together because at that point I don't think I was capable or confident in doing full [care]..."* and *"It did help me learn that I'm going to have to learn to problem solve more.... So I think it helped me to assess the patient holistically because the problem is affecting everything."*

In regards to the faculty mentor, *"I just remember being in like awe of how she'd think of things, like cause we didn't have those critical thinking skills yet...I just remember being like I totally want to be like that when I'm a nurse."*

**Implications:** The students perceived the enrichment activities as enhancing their learning and allowed them to learn things that other experiences did not. Also, all agreed similar activities ought to be incorporated into curriculum. The importance of an expert faculty member was an essential element to the activity. Schools of nursing ought to consider ways to involve faculty members in small group discussions or activities, allowing faculty to role model successful nursing practice.

1 Ravert, P. K. (2004). Use of a human patient simulator with undergraduate nursing students: A prototype evaluation of critical thinking and self-efficacy (Doctoral dissertation, University of Utah, 2004).

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