

Waiting to Get Your BSN Is Too Late: Evidence-Based Practice
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Problem: Preparing Professional Registered Nurses for the 21st century is the task all nursing faculty must address in associate degree programs. Teaching critical thinking and best practices must begin at the associate degree level in order to prepare graduates for jobs in all areas of health care.

Evidence: The Institute of Medicine has identified five core competencies for health professionals to meet both the needs of patients and the requirement of a changing health care system. In response to the third competency “emphasizing evidence-based practices”, our associate nursing degree program has implemented the introduction of this concept to our nursing students. Our partnerships with community hospitals have also emphasized the importance of nurses questioning their interventions to improve patient care and evaluate current nursing practices. At our Advisory meetings directors of nursing and staff educators have clearly stated that evidence-based nursing practice is top priority for new graduates.

Strategy: It is clear where nursing needs to go, but how do we get there from an academic perspective? We are currently graduating 200 students eligible to take the RN license exam each year. In the Fall of 2005, a new course was developed for our program, NR 15 – Freshman Nursing Seminar. Understanding where the direction of nursing is going, this course addresses evidence-based practices in nursing. The concept is being taught to student using the PICO format. Students are encouraged to question their practice and utilize data to insure that they are always using best practices throughout their experience in our nursing program.

Evaluation: This is difficult to comment on since this change has recently been implemented. To validate our results, our intent is to collect evaluations in May 2006. We also will have feedback from local hospitals and the nursing advisory board at this time. The collection will be accomplished using qualitative research; informal interviews of students, exit surveys and graduate surveys. Nursing faculty has been informally interviewed.

Results: Not available until May 2006.

Recommendations: After conducting interviews of nursing faculty instructors, we have learned that our faculty was enthusiastic but their understandings of evidence-based practice were varied. It is our recommendation that all faculty need to have the same understanding of what evidence-based and best practices is so consistency will exist in the education of all of our students.

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