

Clinical Nurse Specialist Students: Getting Evidence into Practice

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Problem and evidence: There has been a long standing disconnect between generating evidence and translating evidence into practice. Barriers to staff nurses using evidence in practice have been lack of education, time, and organizational support. One way to reduce these barriers is to employ Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS). CNSs can bridge the gap between evidence generation and transfer by seeking best evidence, teaching evidence-based practice skills, and guiding the change process as best practices and new policies are implemented. To be successful, CNSs should acquire these skills within their academic preparation.

Strategy: In order to give CNS students the knowledge they need to bridge the evidence generation/translation gap, we instituted a year-long clinical implementation project where students craft a question based on the diagnosis of a practice problem, and search for and critically analyze relevant evidence. Based on this evidence, students design an intervention and then implement the intervention in their clinical practicum experience under the supervision of their CNS preceptor. Finally, students evaluate the success of their intervention.

Practice Change: The evidence-based practice projects replaced an assignment in which students synthesized theory and research to address problems, but did not actually implement their recommendations.

Results: Since the implementation of the projects, students have undertaken a wide variety of patient, nursing, and organizational problems. They have gained first hand experience in the change process and many of the projects have had a lasting impact on their practicum site.

Evaluation: The projects have been viewed positively by graduates as evidenced by their reflections six months following graduation. Graduates have felt well-prepared to take on their roles and to implement best-practices.

Recommendations: We recommend for CNS students an experiential method of learning to provide CNSs with the skills they need to facilitate the transfer of evidence into practice.

Bibliography:

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