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Clinical Learning Experience of Nursing Students in an Innovative Clinical Partnership Model

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Introduction

Clinical education is a major component of the nursing curriculum. Clinical practicum prepares nursing students to apply theories learnt from the classroom to clinical practice. Nursing students constantly express the discrepancy in clinical practice described as the theory-practice gap. Considering the limitations of current clinical models and the manpower shortage in the nursing workplace, an innovative clinical partnership model is developed. Nursing students in groups of six to eight were supervised by a designated clinical teacher nominated by the hospital. A liaison person from the university regularly visited the students and the clinical teacher every week and provided support to students, if needed. This model is expected to draw on the strengths of existing clinical learning models and provide complementary effects to facilitate clinical learning for nursing students.

Objectives

To explore the clinical learning experience of nursing students under the clinical partnership model.

Methodology

The clinical learning experience of students was explored by semi-structured focus group interviews. Four focus groups were formed, including two from the Bachelor of Nursing Programme and another two from the Master of Nursing Science (Pre-registration) Programme. Each group comprised of six to seven students with variations in terms of preceptors of students, wards, and hospitals. The interviews focused on exploring the clinical learning experiences of students, the clinical environment, and their perceptions of the learning model. Interviews approximately lasted from 60 to 105 minutes and were audio-recorded. The qualitative data were analyzed by content analysis.

Result

The nursing students had positive perceptions toward the clinical partnership model. They appreciated the clinical teachers who shared their experience and expertise, thereby facilitating student learning. The students learnt from such teachers how principles can be flexibly applied to different clinical situations. They found that clinical teachers were in a good position to liaise with the healthcare team to provide more learning opportunities for them. Clinical teachers also bridged the communication between the students and the healthcare team. The students felt that the model facilitated their adaptation to the clinical environment and integration in the healthcare team. In clinical learning, both environment and teacher are vital components in preparing nursing students for the realities of professional practice. This study provides empirically based information on the learning experience of students using an innovative clinical partnership model.