E1: Practices of Continuing Professional Education among Registered Nurses in Malaysia

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Introduction: Continuing professional education (CPE) is a means for nurses to maintain their competency and meet the standards of profession to achieve professionalism. The nurses and midwifery board of Malaysia has recognised the importance of CPE and implemented Mandatory Continuing Professional Education (MCPE) from the year 2008. Registered nurses (RNs) are required to participate in CPE activities for re-licensure of practice.

Purpose: This study surveyed the current practices of CPE among RNs in Malaysia.

Method: This was a cross-sectional descriptive study which involved RNs of hospitals and health clinics from Peninsular Malaysia. Multistage cluster sampling was used to recruit the sample. 1000 participants were selected randomly from the hospitals and health clinics. Data was collected using self explanatory questionnaires and analysed using SPSS version 16.

Results: 792 nurses participated in this survey. Only 80% (n=562) of the nurses had engaged in CPE activities for the past 12 months. The most popular CPE activity was workshop (345, 43.60%) followed by conference (323, 40.80%); the least attractive activity (10, 1.3%) was attending tertiary education. The most important factors that motivated participation in CPE were, to provide quality patient care (mean= 4.39) and update their knowledge (mean=4.34). Work commitment (mean=3.54), domestic responsibilities (mean=3.42) were viewed as factors that hindered them engaging in CPE activities.

Discussion: The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies that most of the nurses participated in workshop and conference (DeSilts, 1995; Furze et al., 1999; Adami, et al., 2005). Tertiary education as the least attractive option was reported by Muthu (2006) where time constraint and cost of degree deterred nurses from pursuing education. Lack of involvement in research may be due to nurse's educational level, 1.6% of the cohort had a degree qualification. Similarly with previous studies (DeSilts, 1995; Furze et al., 1999; Adami, et al., 2005), most of the nurses in this study were very motivated to participate in CPE; however time constraint and the cost incurred remained to be the factors that deterred nurses from CPE activities.

Conclusion: Implementation of MCPE is considered to be an important measure to increase nurse's participation in CPE. However the finding in this study shows the policy maker and nurse leader need to review the continuing professional development system to ensure accessibility of relevant CPE activities to all nurses.

E2: Simulation as a Learning Tool in the Master of Nursing (Critical Care) Programme at the National University of Singapore

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Introduction: The Master of Nursing (Critical Care) programme is a 2-year postgraduate course that consist of lectures, tutorials, seminars, practicals, simulations using task-trainers, SimMan and SimMan modules. These sessions help the students to develop critical thinking and apply knowledge in real patients. Ten students were randomized into two groups. As simulation is a relatively new teaching strategy, the students were unsure of the benefits and found the strategy intimidating.

Purpose: This study determined the effect of simulations on student learning and retention when the simulation strategy was used.

Method: The study consisted of a quasi-experimental study where the laboratory component of the course was divided into two parts. Pre-simulation feedback forms were given to the students, then the students were randomized into two groups. The first group was given simulations pre-lecture on the topic and was switched for both the lectures and simulations. The second group was switched for the simulations and lectures. At the end of the second phase, the students were given feedback forms to evaluate their learning and retention when the simulation strategy was used.

Results: For phase I, most comments were learnt from other models and task-oriented activities in the first year of the programme. The students were not familiar with the simulation strategy and rotated for both the simulations and lectures. For phase II, most students commented that they had learnt from other models and task-oriented activities in the second year of the programme, and they were comfortable with the strategy. The students did find it a helpful strategy to learn and improve their nursing skills.

Discussion: From phase I, the students were not familiar with the strategy and it was found that simulations did not improve their learning and retention. However, from phase II, the students were more comfortable with the strategy and it was found that simulations did improve their learning and retention.

Conclusion: It is reasonable to assume that postgraduate students' previous experiences did find it a helpful strategy to learn and improve their nursing skills.
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