

Critical Thinking in Clinical Education

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Background. In today's health care system, that has more acute patients and an increasingly heavy workload; new nurses are expected to work and think at an advanced level to be able to practice safely. Critical thinking is considered an important part of nursing education and a core component noted in a position statement by the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (2011). One noted problem with this is that there is no specific definition for critical thinking. When taken into context this also means that there could be several different ways to teach or encourage critical thinking.

One method for teaching critical thinking is through clinical practice which is facilitated by clinical educators. In the current system of education many clinical instructors are part time or contract instructors who may not have received orientation and education how to teach critical thinking; so may feel that they are not able to adequately teach critical thinking skills.

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to develop a survey that would explore clinical educators' perceived ability to teach critical thinking.

Implications. Development of the survey would address attributes such as fostering inquisitiveness and open-mindedness; analytic approach to problem solving; encouraging independent decision making and their ability to find appropriate learning opportunities. (van Dyck et al, 2005) Attributes with lower use could become foci for educational programs or improved orientations for new clinical instructors. If we can improve clinical instructors' ability to teach critical thinking, then new undergraduate nurses might transition easier into today's health care system.