Background

This synthesis project focuses on the development of an educational module about occupational health and safety (OH&S) for nursing students based on a needs assessment survey tool. The survey assessed students’ learning needs and vulnerability in nursing knowledge gaps in the area of nurses’ personal safety and protection from respiratory infections.

Respiratory infections are one of many examples of hazards that health care professionals are exposed to in the workplace. The recent H1N1 influenza virus outbreak was the driving force for our project. British Columbia Nurses’ Union (BCNU) representatives and employers recognized that respiratory fit testing could not realistically be provided to all BC health workers in such a situation. As a result, an emphasis of nurses conducting their own Point of Care Risk Assessments (PCRA) and determining the level of risk and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) should be supported through education to minimize infection exposure, prevent infection and protect patients.

The reality is that health care professionals have high levels of work related injuries and illnesses. It is important that education and training in occupational health and safety be provided to prepare nursing students for the workplace. Through our Educational Module, student nurses should be competent in performing a PCRA before entering clinical practice and should be able to apply the principles of PCRA in all types of clinical settings.

Purpose

• To ensure future UBC nursing students will feel safe and competent in their nursing practice, resulting in optimal health outcomes for both nurses and patients.
• To assess and improve the quality of clinical practice education for nursing in accordance with the CNIBW and WorkSafeBC practice standards.

Goals and Objectives

• To develop a needs assessment survey tool to evaluate University of British Columbia (UBC) School of Nursing (SoN) 2009 Cohort’s knowledge about nurses’ safety in the workplace.
• To analyze survey data and identify knowledge gaps.
• To create a user-friendly Educational Module that can be used by students prior to clinical practice, including the following:
  • Developing a survey to evaluate students’ knowledge about nurses’ safety and protection from respiratory infections
    • Components of a PCRA
    • Follow-up actions after conducting a PCRA
    • Training the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
    • Awareness of the elements of exposure control plans
• To develop a literature based PCRA Guide to support the implementation of the Educational Module.
• To identify the importance of occupational health and safety in the context of nursing education.

Overview

• A needs assessment survey titled “Nursing Student Safety Survey” was conducted in October 2010 to evaluate the Cohort’s knowledge about PPE and their workplace readiness in terms of their own safety. These surveys were administered in a paper format within a 30 minute time block before two class sessions to collect as many completed surveys as possible.
• 56 out of 87 students were surveyed
• An incentive (a BCNU multi-colour pen) was provided to students upon completion of the Survey. Two meetings were also held with BCNU representatives to present the survey results.
• The Survey results were compiled and presented to the Practice Partners. Together, we collaboratively agreed that the Cohort demonstrated inadequate knowledge of their own safety when it came to dealing with respiratory infections.
• Based on these results and upon consultation with the Practice Partners, it was evident that an Educational Module needed to be created on nursing safety and protection in situations involving respiratory infections.
• We chose to present the Educational Module in multiple forms of media (e.g. powerpoint presentations, audio-visual slides and quick card format) to make the tool as user-friendly resource tool which would enhance nursing knowledge, practice and skills for nursing students.
• We hope to give nursing students from UBC, as well as within the Lower Mainland, the opportunity to use the Educational Module to enhance nursing knowledge, skills and practice on respiratory infections so that safe, competent, compassionate and ethical nursing care can be performed.
• We hope nursing students will have access to the Educational Module through the UBC School of Nursing curriculum and that it be available to the public via the UBC Vista Blackboard Learning System.

Outcomes

• We developed and distributed a survey, analyzed the results, and identified the knowledge gaps present in the Cohort regarding students’ safety in practice settings.
• We addressed this knowledge gap by developing an Educational Module that addresses PPE for respiratory infections.
• We raised the awareness of occupational health and safety among the Cohort.
• We provided the Cohort with basic principles and fundamental tools and resources for their future occupational health and safety.

Key Lessons

• From participating in this Synthesis Project, we learned:
  • To work collaboratively with multiple stakeholders to make effective use of resources and strengths.
  • To organize a time grid that identifies specific and attainable steps to meet goals.
  • To communicate the values and mission of our project throughout the group process.
  • To demonstrate leadership in relating steps to identify problems and propose steps towards managing change.
  • To incorporate evidence and data to identify barriers and drivers to change.
  • To advocate for student nurse safety education and patient safety.

Applications and Next Steps

• The Educational Module and this poster will be made available to the Cohort and the public via:
  • UBC Vista Blackboard Learning System
  • BCNU website
  • Synthesis Project Poster Presentation at UBC Safe in February 2011
  • BCNU OH&S workshops
  • BCNU Convention (first week of March 2011)
  • BCNU Practice Conference in May 2011
• Incorporation of the Educational Module into the occupational health and safety education of health authorities will depend on the collaboration and negotiation with the health authorities.
• Proposal to UBC Nursing BSN Program Development Committee to consider student learning needs and evaluate the importance of clinical nurses’ safety education in lecture hours and clinical hours.

Tools and Resources

• Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare PCRA tool
• Public Health Agency of Canada guidelines
• British Columbia Nurses’ Union Practice Conference and Workers Compensation Board: Occupational Health and Safety Regulation
• Health Care Workers- Protecting Ourselves While Caring for Others (British Columbia Nurses’ Union)
• Powerpoint on Respiratory Infection/Influenza in the Workplace (University of British Columbia)
• UBC Vista Blackboard Learning System
• BCNU staff and UBC SoN faculty members