

A Formative Evaluation of an Age-Friendly, Palliative Care Educational Program to Promote Nursing Student Confidence and Interest in Caring for Older Adults Residing in Nursing Homes

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Background & Significance: With the current shortage of the nursing home workforce and growing older adult population, there is an urgent need to increase interest and capacity for nursing careers in the skilled nursing setting to help ensure equitable access and optimal care for aging patients through end-of-life. Yet, there are gaps in professional nursing programs related to student exposure to the nursing home setting. To meet this need, we developed an innovative educational program for BSN nursing and LNA students in collaboration with nursing home partners. Preliminary findings from our formative program evaluation lend insight into key considerations for educational programs to prepare the future nursing workforce.

Clinical Question: Can the implementation of an online, educational module provide nursing students insight into age-friendly, end-of-life care in the nursing home setting with the overarching goal of promoting student confidence and interest in pursuing a career in long-term care?

Evidence: We combined synthesis of existing literature with participatory approaches to intervention development. We developed a multi-part educational module in collaboration with nursing home partners and informed by literature pertaining to palliative and age-friendly care of the older adult, particularly those living with dementia, in the nursing home setting. Our approach to creation of the educational module was informed by principles of universal design.

Intervention Implementation: The online module consisted of didactic and experiential components, including: 1) 5 videos (a 2-part video case study using simulated scenarios and 3 interviews with nurses/nursing assistants working in long-term care); 2) a reading about the 4M Framework; and 3) discussion questions. Completion of the module was coordinated with nursing home partners and embedded into an existing BSN nursing palliative care course.

Evaluation: Following completion of the module, students were asked to complete an evaluation survey containing 5 Likert-style questions and 4 open-ended questions. Evaluation focused on exploring students' perceptions of and interest working in long-term care, as well as suggestions for improvement to inform program refinement.

Results: Preliminary results from 7 BSN nursing students revealed positive responses, with 100% of students either somewhat or strongly agreeing with the educational activity promoting confidence and new insights in caring for the older adult in the nursing home setting. Free-text responses suggested the educational program prompted reflection for students about biases in themselves and their nursing education regarding nursing home care as well as reinforced key concepts pertaining to care of the older adult. Students appreciated the format of the module, and suggestions for improvement focused on enhancing specific content areas.

Significance/Conclusion: Our formative evaluation suggested an overall positive response to the educational program. The module provided students an opportunity to explore age-friendly, palliative care concepts and care provision in the nursing home setting. Collaborating with nursing home partners helped ensure a perspective of the nursing home workplace grounded in clinical realities. Future directions include integrating student recommendations, embedding this module as a required assignment in a standing palliative care course within the undergraduate BSN curriculum, and program re-evaluation.