

“Advancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration:
Medical Students Partnering with Nurses”

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Clinical Project Abstract Title

Advancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Medical Students Partnering with Nurses

Statement of Purpose

To determine how medical students partnering with a Registered Nurse (RN) through a four-hour shadowing experience influences attitudes toward nurse-physician collaboration.

Setting

A 24-bed medical/surgical ICU at a Magnet-designated, Level One trauma and academic medical center

Sample

Two groups of first or second year medical students

Project Design

The Iowa Model for Evidence-Based Practice guided this practice project; pre- and post-measures were collected.

Methods

A comprehensive literature review revealed three major themes. First, medical students perception of nurses is preconceived and is often one of inferiority compared to physicians. Second, a negative collegial perception leads to poor communication and collaboration, resulting in negative patient outcomes. And third, providing medical students an opportunity to partner with nurses creates a powerful learning experience that reconstructs their image of nursing, elevates the potential for improved collaboration and patient outcomes.

During this pilot project, eleven medical students shadowed an RN. The Jefferson Survey of Attitudes Toward Physician-Nurse Collaboration (Hojat et al., 1999) was completed before and after the shadowing experience. Four open-ended questions were completed post-experience eliciting further insight and feedback. For comparison, a separate group of students (n =12) completed the survey without a shadowing experience.

Findings

Post-experience survey scores indicate a statistically significant ($p = 0.04$) change of attitude toward positive nurse-physician collaboration. This significance is also seen when comparing the no experience group to the post-experience group ($p < 0.01$). Qualitative feedback captures the richness and value the students found in this experience.

Implications for Nursing Practice

This pilot project strongly suggests that a medical student's attitude toward nurse-physician collaboration can be positively influenced through partnering in a shadowing experience. More inter-professional educational opportunities should be built into curricula as a means to promote superior patient care.

Themes identified: Advancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration:

Medical Students Partnering with Nurses

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Open Ended Question Responses

Question 1: What parts of this experience did you find valuable?

Theme: Seeing patient care/healthcare team interactions from a nurse's perspective

- -“directly seeing the role of an ICU nurse”
-“discussing aspects of patient care and learning about nursing training”
-“experiencing interactions between physicians and ICU nurses”
- “Mostly, *getting to chat with an experienced nurse about medicine and her daily tasks was the most valuable piece of this shadowing.* I had the chance to see what nurses have problems with in terms of the health care team; they don't always agree with the exact treatments given in the "orders." Nurses all seem to highly value their respect in their job--> I noticed this in a particular situation when the nurse I worked was asked by the attending if she agreed with the treatment ordered.”
- “I really enjoyed the experience. It was interesting to see the types of patients present in the TLC. Sherry told me interesting stories about interacting with patients. *I thought it was really interesting to discuss how nurses go about implementing doctor's orders and how a doctor can write orders in a way that allows nurses to make adjustments based on changes with the patient/patient safety.*”
- “I valued seeing the strong work ethic of the nurse I was assigned to shadow. I felt that she took ownership of her patient's care with great confidence in the tasks she does in order to ensure that the highest level of care is being delivered. This was unique because the nurse I was shadowing was assigned to care for

one patient only, so I could see the benefit of having a well-staffed ICU in order that it be possible for nurses to only take on one or two patients per day. It was also helpful to be present at physician rounds for the patient that my nurse was caring for.”

- “Realizing the knowledge of the nurses in explaining things to me and also in caring for the patients.”
- “*I found it valuable to see how the nurses manage such complicated patients and all of the aspects that they have to take into account to do their work.* It was valuable to see how the ICU setting worked, what kinds of patients were being treated there and how the nurse, pharmacist, doctors and social workers all interacted together and with the patient's family. I thought it was also valuable for the nurse to take the time to show me around the ICU and tell me a little bit about some of the patients that were staying there and why. I can see where all health care workers need to be very conscientious of their work, communicate well with each other and discuss options. The health care setting does not work well when this teamwork is not in place.”

Theme: Contrasting the role of nurses and physicians

- “The whole experience was extremely valuable! David, the nurse I shadowed, was extremely helpful outlining the basic responsibilities beyond those that I observed first hand. *I felt that I caught a glimpse of the continuity of the nurse's experience in contrast to the seemingly random and sporadic visits from all of the doctor teams.* I also saw the necessity to the patient of that stability amidst the confusion of pain, altered sensorium and fear.”
- “Being able to spend time in the TLC and experiencing what a typical few hours are like for a trauma nurse. *I really appreciated speaking with the nurse I was shadowing about differences between physicians and nurses and some of the rewards and frustrations of the work.*”
- “*I found it valuable talking to the nurses about where they find issues arising between nurses and physicians and how they have worked to eliminate such.* Discussions about miscommunication were also valuable. I also enjoyed learning more about the role of a nurse in a patient's care and their coordination and collaborations with numerous fields of medicine.”
- “*I thought the most beneficial part was discussing the dynamic relationship between doctors and nurses* with David, the nurse I was shadowing. He had a unique perspective as an experienced nurse who also is interested in nursing education. We both agreed that our respective training programs need to

incorporate more interdisciplinary learning to address the current team-based approach to medicine.”

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Question 2: What parts of this experience were less valuable to you?

Theme: Nothing

- “I can't think of anything in particular, except when a patient coded on the floor I was told to run upstairs to watch (just to see...)....but there were too many people there to even see anything! It was a little disappointing, but I am sure it will happen someday!”
- “?”
- “None.”
- “Not sure.”
- “I was familiar with most of the "day to day" tasks because I was a volunteer in the burn unit during undergrad. However, it was still interesting to see it all from a different perspective.”

Theme: Unfamiliar environment and terms

- “Not too much time to discuss as the ICU was busy (although this made it very interesting as well as I was able to see much patient care up close).”
- “I thought the whole experience was valuable. I guess the experience would have been more valuable if I knew more of the acronyms because I did miss some information.”
- “Because I was so unfamiliar with the ICU environment and all of the devices used in patient care, *I felt a little overwhelmed when the nurse was explaining everything to me.* I learned a lot but perhaps a general overview of all of the machines in the room at the very beginning would have made me feel less overwhelmed. The nurse did explain all of the lines being used with the patient and I felt that was very helpful.”

Theme: Participate in more care

- “Occasionally the nurse had me sit at the desk while she helped other nurses. I would have preferred to see what the nurses were doing to gain a better appreciation for everything they are responsible for.”
- “What I gained the most from was just talking to the nurses about their roles and relationships with physicians and therefore the actual "shadowing" part was not all that valuable. My own opinion- but I think most medical students

have a pretty good general idea of the tasks nurses do either by volunteering in a hospital or working as a CNA along side a nurse and therefore I do not know how much is really being gained by the act of shadowing a nurse as they performs their everyday duties.”

Question 3: If this experience were to be repeated (for you or other medical students) what changes would make the experience the most beneficial?

Theme: More time or a repeated experience

- “Additional opportunities to shadow?”
- “Would have loved to shadow for a longer time (6 hours or an entire shift), but the 4 hours were extremely beneficial.”
- “I think it would be great to have more people experience shadowing a nurse. I think interacting with multiple nurses could improve the experience.”
- “I think it would be beneficial to have an option to go to the children's ICU. Perhaps make it possible to shadow two different nurses to get to see two different perspectives/ways of doing something. If possible, have the nurse do a very general introduction to the machines in the room (in addition to introducing the patient and the main condition they have.)”

Theme: No change

- “I am trying... But I really felt the whole time was well spent.”
- “I don't think you need to change anything except possibly moving it from Spring Break! That would increase your participation.”

Theme: Altered Format

Include variations of nurses and times of day to expand the experience

- “I would probably offer a second experience during a different time of the day. It was great to talk with the nurse during the "quieter" part of the day, so we were able to converse about random things. However, if I were to do a second experience, I'd want to shadow the nurse in action somehow just to gain a perspective on their work in a major emergency.”
- *“I started with one nurse and then half way through followed another nurse and both have very different perspectives on nurse/physician relationships; so I think it would be beneficial to split the 4 hours time between two nurses. I also think 4 hours was a good length but I would not go any longer- 3 hours may have been better. I think what is needed most by medical students is more of a lecture supplement about the role*

of a nurse and what they can and cannot do and how to have better communication.”

- “Just having the students shadow during all aspects of the experience instead of waiting at the desk during parts of it (if this is possible).”

Include an academic component to the experience

- ‘It wouldn't be a bad idea to have a list of 3-5 questions for us to keep in the back of our mind so that we can more easily formulate a take-home message. For instance, "What differences do you see between the duties of an ICU nurse and the duties of a Critical Care physician?" ‘
- “I started with one nurse and then half way through followed another nurse and both have very different perspectives on nurse/physician relationships; so I think it would be beneficial to split the 4 hours time between two nurses. I also think 4 hours was a good length but I would not go any longer- 3 hours may have been better. *I think what is needed most by medical students is more of a lecture supplement about the role of a nurse and what they can and cannot do and how to have better communication.*”

Question 4: How do you anticipate this experience influencing your role as a medical student and as a future physician?

Theme: Improved attitude towards nurses

- “It was quite beneficial to closely shadow a nurse and experience their daily duties; this experience served to increase my already great respect for nurses as I saw their compassion and level of knowledge in caring for patients and how they interacted with physicians. I learned more about how to work with nurses to provide the best care for patients.”
- “I am not sure exactly, but I do appreciate knowing what types of responsibilities nurses have. I definitely gained perspective on how nurses want to be treated and consulted upon by the physicians in treating patients. *It seems pretty clear that the whole healthcare team is more fluent and efficient when physicians and nurses consult one another in treatment plans.* I definitely plan on keeping this in the back of my mind for future reference!”
- I certainly am more aware of the times in between when I see a patient. The care they are receiving is a majority of their experience. *I think before this experience I would be open to input and advice from those that are caring for the patients the majority of the time. Now, I think I will actively seek it out!*

- It definitely gave me a greater appreciation of the variety of things nurses are responsible for, from patient comfort and communication, to managing medications and complications, to continuous monitoring and vigilance of patients' conditions. *It also confirmed the need to include nurses in patient rounding and decision-making for patient care as well as hospital policy and activity.*
- The experience was useful in discovering ways that a doctor can write orders/interact with a nurse that gives the nurse an opportunity to make changes in the patient care depending on the patient's changing condition.
- I hope to have the same level of confidence and ability to explain procedures and medical devices to my patients as my nurse did toward her patient and the patient's family.
- Knowing that the nurses are very knowledgeable and can recognize subtle changes in their patients as they spend the most time with them.

Theme: Communication and collaboration between nurse/physician is imperative

- As a medical student and future physician, I now have a greater understanding of the role of a nurse and how in collaboration we can do what is best of our patients. *Communication is key to avoiding issues and we both (nurses/physicians) must work to improve it and have an understanding for each role we play.* I also hope to look more to nurses for feedback and suggestions, as they are the eyes and ears of our patients when we are not available. I also have gained a greater appreciation for nurses.
- I feel like I have a better understanding of how the ICU is run and what kind of complicated conditions the patients being treated have. *I also have a better understanding of how the different health care professionals work together and how the normal daily flow of operations goes when treating a sick patient in the ICU.* I better understand the nurse's role in the ICU and how much training is needed to be comfortable with so much responsibility. It really seemed that there was so much to learn and the stakes were very high at times. I really commend the staff for working in such a high stakes environment. I also learned how in many situations there is not just one right answer - one physician may say one thing and another says a different thing. Then there has to be some sort of compromise or a final decision is made. The discussion that occurs is very important.

Theme: Teamwork

- It reinforces the idea of working together as a team focused on patient care instead of fulfilling individual responsibilities.