

Literature Review: “Transition to Practice During COVID-19 in New Graduate Nurses” (2022)

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Introduction/ Background

- “...competency can be hard to measure in a standardized way. Validated sets of competencies can help provide a framework to start articulating and integrating competencies into nursing education.” (Lam et al., 2020)
- “The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted nursing education and required modification of instructional methods and clinical experiences. Given the variation in education, rapid transition to virtual platforms, and NCLEX-RN testing stressors, this cohort faced unique losses and gains influencing their transition into clinical practice.” (Smith, et al., 2021)
- Many American colleges and universities transitioned to using online modules, lectures, and virtual clinical experiences.
- “If adjustments are not made to online nursing pedagogy and content, there is a potential risk of students not meeting registration requirements, which could produce a shortage in nursing during pandemic recovery.” (Wittenberg et al., 2021)

Research Questions

How are graduate nurse competencies defined?
 In new graduate nurses (NGNs), are nurses who graduated during 2020-2022 compared with nurses who graduated before the COVID-19 pandemic more or less clinically competent during their transition to practice?

Findings

Readiness for practice is a multi-faceted concept that includes the synthesis of clinical, cognitive and professional abilities. (Mirza, et al., 2019)

“NGNs in the 2020-2022 cohort have expressed increased feelings of fear due to concerns about performing in the nursing role and decreased fundamental nursing skill practice in a hospital setting.” (Smith, et al., 2021)

Students from competency--based education nursing programs have “a hands-on experience in a safe learning environment” that can increase confidence and enhance application of skills before they transition to practice. (Herron, E. & Weeks, K., 2021)
 Clinical experience is an important facet of curriculum material application.

“Though the loss of expected learning experiences may have contributed to participants’ overall fear of transitioning to the role, the unexpected gains from VCRES were greater confidence in providing for patient safety, stronger professional communication/leadership skills, and high levels of support.” (Ulmen et al., 2022)

Methods

12 peer reviewed research articles were reviewed and synthesized

Conclusions

Without clinical competency evaluations or assistance of virtual learning experiences, NGNs that graduated during COVID-19 would have lacked in clinical competency to adjusting to their allocated role, collaborating with the interprofessional team, and performing evidence based practices.

We know that NGNs who graduated during COVID-19 were more fearful to step into their roles as nurses following graduation due to limited experiences in the clinical setting, however more research is warranted to make better conclusions about how those cohorts of nurses transitioned to practice during the pandemic.

Nursing Implications

- Virtual learning tools and virtual clinical replacement experiences (VCRES) could be used to increase accessibility and cost-effectiveness of nursing education.
- Integration of evidence-based practice throughout the nursing curricula of students can contribute to their growth and allow them to engage in EBP to sustain their practice as NGNs (Lam, Schubert, C. F., & Herron, E. K., 2020)
- Proper preparation of students by nursing faculty for their transition to practice is the first line “[giving] [NGNs] the tools to become safe and effective health care providers” (Herron, E. & Weeks, K., 2021)

Simplified Concept Model of Practice Readiness

Antecedents	Attributes	Consequences
Maturity	Cognitive	Safe Care
Clinical practice experience	Clinical	Confidence
Socialization to the discipline	Professional	Transition to the nursing role