

ABSTRACT

In the spring of 2009, in response to mounting pressure from external regulatory and accrediting agencies, new curricular elements aimed at building competence in communication techniques that enhance patient safety were introduced to twenty-two (22) senior baccalaureate nursing students at a small, rural college in New Hampshire. These techniques were didactically taught in the classroom and subsequently performed by the students in the clinical practice environment while under faculty supervision. The purpose of this study was to explore new-graduate nurse experiences with the use of the I-SBAR-R communication technique in their practice in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning experience they had in their undergraduate education.

A specific, best-practice communication technique recommended for use to enhance patient safety is called “I-SBAR-R”. I-SBAR-R is an acronym which stands for Identification-Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation-Readback, and was originally designed to address the improvement of communication and teamwork in aviation and military settings. It was later adapted for use in health care settings.

At the time of graduation, all of the twenty-two (22) senior nursing students studied demonstrated competency in using the specific I-SBAR-R communication technique with physicians in the clinical setting, and subsequently went on to pass their National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX). Eight (8) of these graduates recently entered practice at a nearby academic medical center and were participants in the evaluation.

Using Realist review, a method of systematic review designed for complex interventions, the question of teaching effectiveness was addressed. Realist review methodology focuses specific attention on the effect of the implementation context as a determinant of outcome. A discussion of how the various clinical contexts in which the nursing graduates were working affected the use of the I-SBAR-R technique is presented. In addition, participant reflections and recommendations for improving teaching in the undergraduate program are offered.