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Improving Communication Skills of New Graduate Nurses: Using SBAR Format

By

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A project submitted to the faculty of

Gardner-Webb University Hunt School of Nursing
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Abstract

New graduate nurses face many challenges as they transition to professional practice (Mongale et al., 2018). Support from transition to practice (TTP) programs can have a tremendous impact on the success of a new graduate nurse and improve retention rates (Silvestre, 2017). Research identifies a gap in new graduate knowledge of communication skills (Song & McCreary, 2020). Education on improving communication using a standard format can impact patient outcomes and improve provider confidence (Marshall et al., 2008). Research also links provider confidence and proficiency to improved outcomes (Owens & Keller, 2018). Benner's Novice to Expert Theory provides a theoretical foundation to understand new graduate nurses' learning needs and develop education for new graduate nurses (Ozdemir, 2019). Situation, background, assessment, and recommendation (SBAR) format can communicate clinical and non-clinical needs (Jurns, 2016). New graduate nurses have a baseline knowledge of SBAR format due to its prevalence in patient reporting structure. By educating new graduate nurses on alternative uses for SBAR format, this project aims to improve proficiency in communication. A sample of twenty-seven new graduate nurses was presented with information on how to use SBAR format to communicate needs. The new graduate nurses participated in an activity where they applied SBAR format to a case scenario. Post-education survey results demonstrate increased confidence and proficiency in the utilization of SBAR format. The new graduate nurses identified the information from the presentation as applicable and usable in their practice. Future research is needed to continue supporting new graduate nurses' transition to clinical practice with skills including communication as a cornerstone to success.

Keywords: New Graduate Nurse, Transition to Practice, TTP, Communication, SBAR, Situation Background Assessment, and Recommendation

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Chapter I: Introduction

The healthcare environment contains more challenges for new graduate nurses than in any previous years. In addition to the challenges of transition to clinical practice, new graduate nurses are faced with the obstacles resulting from a global pandemic (Monagle et al., 2018). There is no denying the pandemic has caused health care systems to struggle to meet the needs of patients and family members. The pandemic has also shed light on the insufficiencies in the healthcare system including preparedness to handle the mental strain of caring for the abundance of critically ill. Healthcare workers are overworked, understaffed, and exhausted from over two years of working tirelessly. The weight of the pandemic has caused a mass exodus in all healthcare fields, including nursing. New graduate nurses are entering units which are short staffed and in ruins. As an added weight to this problem many of these nurses have completed nursing school during the pandemic. Due to the pandemic, clinical hours were reduced or changed to an online format so students did not have opportunities to practice skills hands on (Morin, 2020). As new graduate nurses navigate the health care system and clinical practice, they must be advocates for themselves and communicate their needs. Clear and effective communication with other team members and leadership can improve patient outcomes (Olivera & Brown, 2020). Effective communication strategies are one of many identified learning needs of new graduate nurses (Monagle et al., 2018). By developing education for new graduate nurses on methods of effective communication and interprofessional development nurse educators can support professional practice and improve nurse retention.

Significance

New graduate nurses lack the knowledge and tools needed to effectively convey learning and development needs. Research suggests lack of clinical experience contributes to new graduate nurses' struggles to identify needed changes to patients' plans of care (Monagle et al., 2018). Using a standardized communication tool new graduate nurses can learn to identify practice problems and organize communication of resolutions (Marshall et al., 2008). Situation background, assessment, and recommendation (SBAR) format has been recommended by the Joint Commission as well as the Institute for Healthcare Improvement as a standardized communication format across many specialties including nursing (Wang et al, 2015). As new graduate nurses face challenges in their nursing practice, they need proper training to advocate for themselves as well as their patients. In a healthcare system where workers are being stretched daily, new graduate nurses need to communicate clearly and concisely to every patient, every time. Providing new graduate nurses with the proper education and a standardized tool will help new graduate nurses have increased confidence in communication skills with patient handoff, nurse leadership, and other system needs.

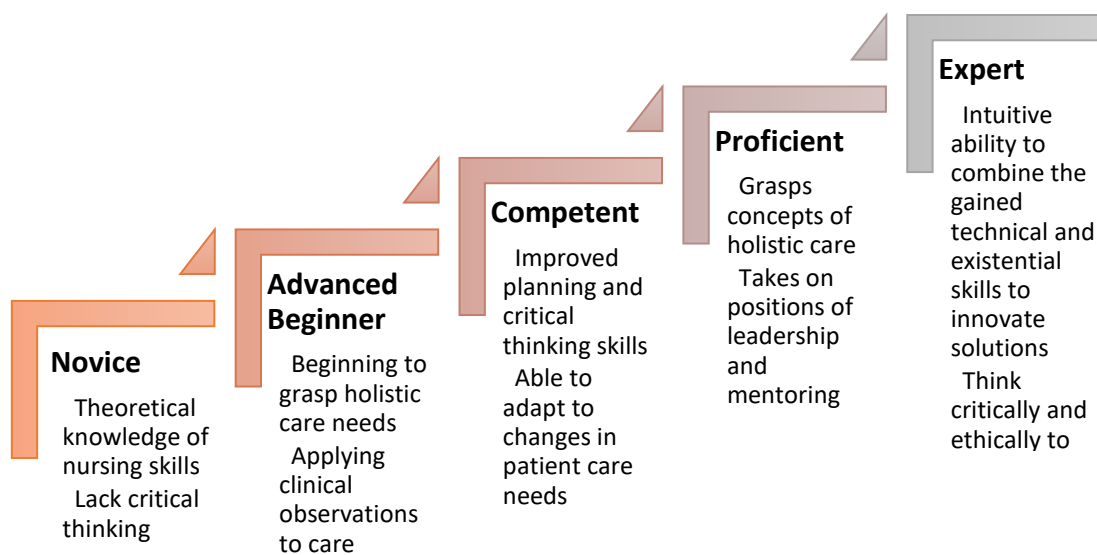
Purpose

The purpose of this project is to educate new graduate nurses on the importance of clear communication and provide them with a structured format for presenting needs; with the goal of increasing student confidence and competency (Owens & Keller, 2018). A standardized communication tool will be developed and presented to the new graduate nurses. The tool will provide a framework for choosing an audience, presenting a problem, clarifying pertinent background information, and describing observations,

assessment findings, and their recommended solutions or next steps (Marshall et al., 2008). This project will utilize the standard communication format SBAR to help students communicate nonclinical related problems. While traditionally thought of as a tool for a patient report in the medical field, SBAR can be applied to non-clinical situations as a means of conveying a clear and concise message (Jurns, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

Benner's Novice to Expert Theory outlines five steps of growth for a nurse as they gain an understanding of nursing practice. The stages outlined in the theory are novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert (Carlson et al., 1989). Each stage has specific goals needed to progress to the next stage (Ozdemir, 2019). New graduate nurses fall in the novice stage. In the novice stage, new graduate nurses have a theoretical knowledge of nursing practice and are task-minded (Ozdemir, 2019). New graduate nurses are at the learning stage where they are discovering the application of the theoretical knowledge learned in nursing school (Murray et al., 2019). Benner's novice to expert theory will be used to develop targeted education to support the transition of nurses from novice to advanced beginner. Education will help the students apply theoretical knowledge of communication skills to real-world practice problems they might encounter.

Figure 1*CTE Diagram*

Chapter II: Literature Review

For this project, a literature review was done to determine the need for education of new graduate nurses on communication strategies, challenges of teaching new graduate nurses, and current data supporting the use of SBAR to improve communication. New graduate nurses have various educational needs when entering clinical practice, including professional development competencies such as effective communication (Song & McCreary, 2020). Teaching new graduate nurses means addressing the needs of the adult learner and functioning in the educational environment during a pandemic (Casey et al., 2021). When developing education, the target audience of adult learners will be the focus. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted many aspects of healthcare including the education of nurses (Morin, 2020). Clear communication has been shown to be a factor in reducing sentinel events in the hospital (Oliveira & Brown, 2020). Studies demonstrate communication breakdowns can be attributing factors in two-thirds of sentinel events (Kostoff et al., 2016). Research shows the importance of clear communication in healthcare and how SBAR formatting can improve the clarity of messages, save time, and reduce medical errors.

Song and McCreary (2020) took an innovative approach to assess the learning needs of new graduate nurses. They identified most programs base their evaluations of new graduate nurses on the assessments of experienced nurses (Song & McCreary, 2020). This method of evaluation is done without considering the perspective of the new graduate nurses themselves (Song & McCreary, 2020). By focusing on the expressed learning needs of new graduate nurses, educators can better support professional development and hopefully increase retention rates. The researchers looked at the new

graduate nurse's perception of both hard and soft skills. Hard skills include the clinical knowledge and technical skills necessary to function as a nurse. Soft skills are often overlooked but are crucial for success in nursing practice. Soft skills include critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and professionalism. Song and McCreary (2020) identified the growing concern of new graduate nurses to develop these soft skills, one of which is communication. Song and McCreary (2020) presented findings from 16 studies where new graduate nurses were involved in a skills assessment. Out of the 16 studies reviewed, 8 identified communication as an educational opportunity for new graduate nurses (Song & McCreary, 2020). Clear communication is essential for properly managing a patient's care. New graduate nurses reported learning needs in communicating with parties such as teammates, leadership, patients, and family members. Song and McCreary (2020) state lack of confidence in soft skills may reflect nursing education's lack of attention to these competencies. By providing new graduate nurses with objective evaluation for the seemingly non-tangible soft skills; educators can support professional development of new graduate nurses in clear communication (Song & McCreary, 2020).

Kavanagh and Szweda (2017) analyzed the entry-level competencies and practice readiness of new graduate nurses. The goal of the study was to identify competency needs in new graduate nurses to help develop targeted education (Kavanagh & Szweda, 2017). Kavanagh and Szweda (2017) identified the gap between the passing of boards and the ability of nurses to operate in professional practice. They write how "ultimately the standardized assessments do not measure a student's understanding of safe patient care or the ability to apply knowledge" (Kavanagh & Szweda, 2017, p. 57). There is

much evidence to suggest new graduate nurses are not prepared for clinical practice. Using the Performance-Based Development System (PBDS) Kavanagh and Szweda (2017) gathered data on the readiness of new graduate nurses for nursing practice. In 2015, 23% of new graduate nurses studied were classified as unable to demonstrate problem and urgency recognition, indicating they were not ready for safe nursing practice (Kavanagh & Szweda, 2017). The study compared scores between baccalaureate and associate degree programs and found no significant difference. Learning needs for new graduate nurses include critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. (Kavanagh & Szweda, 2017). Changes in curriculum should be directed at the unification of classroom and clinical practice. New graduate nurses' readiness to practice in a clinical setting can be fostered through the creation of programs where clinical practice and classroom learning meet. Kavanagh and Szweda (2017) propose educators do not lose sight of the goal of improving patient experience and outcomes. Using innovative learning methods, new graduate nurses can be better prepared for clinical practice. Using SBAR to improve communication will take a known strategy new graduate nurses are familiar with and apply new methods of communication.

Franko et al., (2021) evaluated the use of SBAR communication in pharmacy students. The goal of the study was to determine if students educated on use of SBAR would use it in simulation without prompt, one year after initial instruction. Healthcare professionals spend a large portion of time in interdepartmental collaboration with one another representing the importance of ensuring clear and structured conversation skills (Marshall et al, 2008). In the study, participants were given a lesson on the components and application of SBAR (Franko et al., 2021). One year after initial education the

students participated in a simulation. During the simulation, students had to communicate with another healthcare team member. Researchers wanted to see if the students would use the components of SBAR with no prompting (Franko et al., 2021). It has already been established SBAR structure is effective at reducing errors and improving communication. The researchers went beyond determining if SBAR is an effective form of conveying a message and extended the study to determine if there was a practical application to the technique. It is one thing to teach students to use SBAR for communication and another to determine if students will apply the skill to situations. The non-prompted application of a skill to clinical practice demonstrates the ease of use for the learners. For the study, there were two groups of students studied one year apart. Out of the first group, 86% utilized all four components of SBAR when communicating in a simulation one year after initial instruction (Frank et al., 2021). This data suggests SBAR is not only a great method of structuring a message for an intended audience but can be easily retained and used in practice (Marshall et al, 2008). One of the key components of any change in policy and workflow is ease of use. The goal is to make communicating easier for staff and therefore reduce errors. The study by Franko et al., (2021) clearly shows the practical application and long-term use of SBAR to communicate.

Another example of the use of SBAR formatting in communication is found in a study by Oliveira and Brown (2020). In the study, the authors looked to improve the communication of laboratory science students by educating them on SBAR format and applying the knowledge in simulation. The team determined communication to be one of the competencies needed for students to work in a complex health care system. These competencies were determined by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality along

with guidance from the Department of Defense (Oliveira & Brown, 2020). Oliveira and Brown (2020) state “SBAR is a standardized way of communicating critical information that requires immediate attention and action” (p.137). The researchers wanted to establish if there was an impact of structured communication on patient safety and how it could be applied to common situations in a simulation learning environment (Oliveira & Brown, 2020). Post-survey results revealed students had increased confidence in communicating with other members of the healthcare team (Oliveira & Brown, 2020). The researchers suggested more practice for students could increase their proficiency in the skills (Oliveira & Brown, 2020). A study by Owens and Keller (2018) explored the relationship between provider proficiency and competency. The study demonstrated the positive relationship between provider confidence and perceived competency in patient care (Owens & Keller, 2018). The results from Oliveira and Brown’s (2020) study concluded SBAR was an underutilized communication tool that could easily be applied to improve clarity in interprofessional messaging. The findings from the study support the need for education on communication techniques and the need for student practice to increase confidence and proficiency. When developing education on SBAR techniques, dedicated time for student interaction with learning should be a priority.

To demonstrate the effectiveness of SBAR format in interprofessional communication Kostoff et al. (2016) studied ninety-six pharmacy students. SBAR format was chosen for this study because of its simple and structured nature (Kostoff et al., 2016). By creating a standard communication format there is an expected order of information for both parties. The students were educated on the elements of SBAR format and participated in case scenarios to speak with other disciplines (Kostoff et al.,

2016). The study aimed to determine if SBAR format could improve interprofessional collaboration and student confidence in speaking with other members of the healthcare team (Kostoff et al., 2016). The students participated in case scenarios established in multiple settings, such as the community and primary care (Kostoff et al, 2016). By challenging the boundaries of the application of SBAR format, Kostoff et al. (2016) determined SBAR format can be applied to different scenarios and settings to improve communication and participant confidence in conveying a message to another member of the healthcare team. The success of this study demonstrates the adaptability of SBAR format to be utilized in other methods than patient hand-off.

Wang et al., (2015) provided eighteen master's degree nursing students with education on SBAR formatting and studied the results of pre- and post-surveys. The researchers aimed to improve health outcomes through education on SBAR communication for patient reporting (Wang et al., 2015). The students were given a pre-workshop questionnaire to rate their ability to communicate in a patient report. Then the students were presented with a PowerPoint presentation and video example on how to use SBAR format. Last the students had an interactive role-play session and post-questionnaire on their perceptions of the education (Wang et al., 2015). Results of the post-survey revealed that 93.8% of the students agreed they would use the tool in practice (Wang et al., 2015). The study supported the use of SBAR formatting in communicating and students' perception of ease of use in the clinical setting.

The audience of this project will be new graduate nurses. One of the major barriers to educating new graduate nurses is the adaptations required due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Casey et al., 2016) In her article *Nursing Education After COVID-19*:

Same or Different, Morin (2020) describes the rapid transition educators faced in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Educators in all fields were forced to transition learning to online platforms as quarantine mandates unfolded worldwide, including nursing educators. Educators in both clinical and academic roles were stretched thin as increased patient volume rapidly depleted resources. Many educators utilized online platforms for education where in-person classes were halted (Morin, 2020). This created many challenges for educators and students who lacked certain technical requirements and internet access (Morin, 2020). Changes had to be made to content presentation, examination procedures, and competency evaluations (Morin, 2020). Nursing educators were challenged to prepare nursing students for clinical practice in the absence of in-person clinical experiences (Morin, 2020). Lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) and increased risk of exposure for students caused hospitals to shut their doors to students (Morin, 2020). Ceasing clinical rotations decremented nursing student education and their overall preparedness to care for patients post-graduation. In response, educators opted for virtual, and where possible, in-person simulation experiences to bridge this gap (Morin, 2020). Morin (2020) challenges readers to think about the curriculum requirements in comparison to the needed skills of the new graduate nurse. By reexamining the curriculum as society adapts to a new normal educators can harness what research has demonstrated as true learning needs and important competencies. Morin (2020) proposes educators move toward a competency-based education model where students are taught to think critically and are better prepared to care for what is a generalist nurse upon graduation. Morin (2020) argues that removing specialty care curriculum such as maternal and newborn could allow for more time for new graduate nurses to develop

needed skills for entry-level nursing. Most importantly, Morin (2020) challenges educators to be advocates for their students. As healthcare recovers from the heavy burden of the pandemic, nurses will need continued support from educators to advocate for quality education (Morin, 2020). Nurses make an essential contribution to the health of society and their education needs to be prioritized to promote safe patient care (Morin, 2020). Education on communication is one of the many learning needs of new graduate nurses. Educating new graduate nurses will require consideration of baseline education and elevating competencies to support safe and effective patient care.

In the study by Marshall et al., (2021), researchers used focus groups of new graduate nurses to determine what practice challenges were part of the transition from nursing school into professional practice. One of the themes identified by new graduate nurses was challenges in communication (Marshall et al., 2021). New graduate nurses reported being overwhelmed by the transition to nursing practice in the middle of a pandemic and expressed difficulties in communication with patients and other members of the healthcare team (Marshall et al., 2021). While masks pose a physical barrier to hearing messages, functioning as a novice nurse creates an added level to communication needs (Marshall et al, 2021). Despite the reality shock of real-world nursing practice and the identified learning needs, the new graduate nurse focus groups also expressed pride in their profession (Marshall et al., 2021). By supporting the education of new graduate nurses and breaking down communication barriers, the excitement new graduate nurses have toward nursing practice can be elevated to support patient outcomes (Marshall et al., 2021).

Support from leadership is key to the development of confidence and success of new graduate nurses (Owens & Keller, 2018.) Owens and Keller (2018) studied the relationship between provider confidence and perceived provider proficiency. The study surveyed staff and patients on their perceived confidence in their care (Owens and Keller, 2018). When developing the communication skills of new graduate nurses' leaders must be involved in the planning, implementation, and maintenance. The results of the staff and patient surveys demonstrated the importance of confidence in patient care (Owens & Keller, 2018). Owens and Keller (2018) also wrote "team confidence is driven by the organizational culture as well as the confidence and competence of the individuals who make up the team (p.104)."

Conclusions from this review support the need for the education of new graduate nurses on structured communication tools to support patient outcomes. By understanding the importance of communication in nursing practice educators can begin to develop methods of improving skills for new graduate nurses. New graduate confidence and proficiency are key drivers to success (Owens & Keller, 2018) From the literature it can be concluded that SBAR formatting can be applied to various case scenarios as a method of conveying a message to another party (Kostoff et al., 2016). Challenged by the educational foundation of pandemic-facilitated education, leaders will need to provide added support as new nurses transition into bedside roles. By using SBAR formatting as a foundation for clear communication, we can build off a previously understood concept in communication and expand the application to non-clinical situations such as patient safety and departmental needs. SBAR formatting can be applied to both written and

verbal communication as a means of structuring a message for consumer understanding
(Marshall et al., 2008).

Chapter III: Needs Assessment

New graduate nurses require support as they transition out of nursing school and into clinical nursing practice. Recent changes in curriculum delivery and clinical experiences have further inhibited the new graduate's ability to function in the healthcare setting (Morin, 2020). This project will focus on improving communication skills of new graduate nurses using a standardized format. Situation, background, assessment, and recommendation (SBAR) is a format used traditionally in healthcare for bedside reporting (Jurns, 2019). The needs assessment of this project outlines the factors necessary for the design, implementation, and evaluation of the education for the new graduate nurses. An in-depth review of each concept will outline the setting, sponsors, resources, and cost-benefit of the project.

Target Audience

The target audience for this education will be new graduate nurses. Worldwide, approximately 1.7 million new graduate nurses enter the healthcare system (Ulupinar & Aydogan, 2021). In the United States, around 188,000 new graduate nurses enter the workforce every year (Peralta, 2021). Research shows approximately 20-30% of new graduate nurses leave healthcare before the end of the first year (Song & McCreary, 2020) (Peralta, 2021). Retention rates are a key driver of transition to practice programs (TTP) (Trepanier, 2012). While all nurses could benefit from education on communication, new graduate nurses developing their foundation of professional nurse practice need particular attention to such professional development skills. TTP programs work to transition the new graduate nurse to function independently as a member of a healthcare team. Depending on the hospital system and program, it can cost tens to

hundreds of thousands of dollars to train and support these nurses. By focusing on improving communication needs in new graduate nurses the goal of this project is to improve confidence in new graduate nurses with the hope of increasing retention rates.

Setting

New graduate nurses will be selected from a TTP program at a not-for-profit healthcare system in North Carolina. The new graduate nurses will be employed in different intensive care units across the system. New graduate nurses have a unique learning perspective due to their limited clinical experience. As novice nurses, they are challenged to take the skills learned in nursing school and apply them to real situations. Nursing school gives students the tools as a foundation for nursing professional practice. New graduate nurses often struggle to understand and communicate needs. The cultural commitments of the system will impact the learning outcomes. As a system, the nurses are challenged to improve health, elevate hope, and advance healing for all. Keeping the mission in mind, education will be targeted to support patient outcomes and increase provider competency.

Sponsors and Stakeholders

The overall goal of this project is to improve the communication of non-clinical needs by new graduate nurses. By improving communication, the project will assist the professional development of new graduate nurses. Often, soft skills are overlooked in training programs due to time and financial constraints (Song & McCreary, 2020). Research shows there is a great need for new graduate nurses to have training in effective communication (Song & McCreary, 2020). Mistakes in communication have been linked to medical errors (Kostoff et al., 2016). New graduate nurses are entering healthcare post

the COVID-19 pandemic. Systems are inundated with nurses who are overworked and exhausted from working tirelessly for the past two years. New graduate nurses are expected to quickly adapt and perform at the bedside. New graduate nurses will need to perfect their communication skills to ensure messages are clear, concise, and organized.

SWOT Analysis

Table 1

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Potential to improve retention ● Founded on previously understood concepts ● Professional relationship with TTP team ● Motivation of new graduate nurses and interest in education ● Nursing confidence and efficiency to improve patient outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Subjective nature of improvement is difficult to measure ● Apathy towards training ● Staffing shortages ● Current educational load during TTP program
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research supporting the importance of communication ● Current use of format within system ● TTP focus on development of professional development for new graduate nurses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Time for education and implementation ● Scheduling conflicts with students and presenters ● Funds to cover education development, presentation, and follow up review ● Resources to study outcomes

Educating new graduate nurses on elements of clear communication using SBAR can improve retention, motivate change, and provide safe patient care. New graduate nurses have previous knowledge of SBAR formatting as it is widely used in healthcare to give patient reports. When new graduate nurses face challenges in the workplace they

must have the appropriate tools to raise awareness and enact change. New graduate nurses' opinions and observations are often overlooked due to their inexperience.

Discussions with the TTP team at a local healthcare system revealed the appetite for new and improved education for new graduate nurses with regard to communication. A key driver to the success of these programs is nurse retention. As healthcare systems invest in the education of new graduate nurses, they are often required to commit to employment contracts which ensures the system gets a return on their investment by having the newly trained nurses in the units. A positive impact on patient outcomes and retention rates will be difficult to establish due to the complex factors related to both results. Due to the large course load already given to the new graduate nurses, researchers will be forced to be creative and aware of student time demands. Research supporting the need for education of new graduate nurses in combination with the expressed interest in the subject by the TTP team establishes the opportunities for implementation. The education of new graduate nurses is threatened by two major resources: time and money. Educators require time to develop the presentation; this is challenged by the shortage of nurse educators and the revolving door of new program candidates. There is no "off" season for new graduate educators because schools have graduation dates throughout the year. Not only is the project threatened by educator time, but new graduate nurses' time. The new graduate nurses are already hard-pressed to accommodate time on the unit with the classes provided by nurse residency programs. Every minute a new nurse graduate sits in a class the system must pay for their time. A clear demonstration of the cost-benefit of this education is crucial to the attainment of funding. Once education is implemented, time will need to be allotted to study outcomes and application. The hope will be to identify

specific examples of education applications. Overcoming the unique challenges of new graduate nursing education can improve competency and confidence in new graduate nurses. Nurses who feel valued as change agents develop system loyalty and therefore increase retention rates.

Resources

Three main resources needed for this project can be categorized into people, time, and funding. The first classification of people needed will be leadership and management. Leaders and management must first prioritize the education and allocate the appropriate funds and time for educators to develop and implement the education. Often clinical nurse educators are pulled into staffing leaving their responsibilities for education for another day. Time must be allocated for curriculum development, presentation, and sustainability. New graduate nurses have an identified learning need for soft skills including communication strategies. Nurse leaders must allocate time to learn these skills if we are to see improvement in any learning need. Lastly, the project will require funding. Educators will need compensation for hours worked on the development, presentation, and evaluation of outcomes. New graduate nurses will need to be paid to attend the courses and any follow-up dialogues which may occur. After the education is presented, the project leader will need to assess the success of the project by performing interviews with the new graduate nurses, clinical staff, and leadership to determine areas of success and identify opportunities for improvement. Currently, there is a dedicated team of educators whose entire focus is new graduate education. They will be key assets to the development and implementation of the project as they understand new graduate learning needs, demands on their time, and psychosocial interactions. New graduate

nursing programs are challenged to onboard more nurses to fill the massive staffing shortages caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The increased demand for more timely transitions of new graduates in combination with a stagnant learning team makes adding more to the curriculum a challenge. By prioritizing new graduate education on communication and supplying educators with the money and time to implement, the communication skills of new graduate nurses can be improved.

Team Members

The project leader will be supported throughout this project by several key team members to design, present, and evaluate the effectiveness of the education. The project chair will oversee the development and approval of the project design. Educational leaders within the organization and managers from each department will help with the nurse graduate nurses' scheduling, developing educational material, and evaluating the success of the educational intervention provided to new graduate nurses.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

A cost-benefit analysis of this project will focus on a few key elements. The benefits of development, implementation, and evaluation of the education on standardized communication format using SBAR must outweigh the cost. The goal is to improve communication as a direct factor in patient outcomes. In return, the nurses will be comfortable and confident in their communication skills. By supporting the nurses in the areas of self-identified learning needs turnover rates will decrease, and patient care outcomes should increase. Trepanier et al., (2012) did a narrative review of the cost-benefit of new graduate nurse residency programs. In the article, research highlights the direct relationship between residency programs and decreased turnover rates. This

research supports the goal of decreasing turnover rates meaning hospital systems will not have to spend funds on training new employees or rely on contract labor (Trepanier et al., 2012). Trepanier et al., (2012) writes how the healthcare “environment may create pressure for nurse leaders to decrease new graduate orientation” to meet staffing needs (p. 207). In return it is shown how new graduate programs decrease turnover as a whole and are beneficial not only to the nurses but the healthcare system as a whole (Trepanier et al., 2012).

Conclusion

New graduate nurses are hitting the floors of hospitals across the world daily. This unique population of learners are challenged by the reality shock of real-life nurse practice and all the pressures to perform as independent care providers (Trepanier, 2012). Using the setting of current new graduate nurse orientation in a local not for profit hospital system, educational offerings to the new graduate nurses on structured communication using SBAR techniques will be implemented. The current teams in place to support new graduate transition will be leaned on for support and guidance as this project is directly in line with their goals. Resources will be required to design, implement, and evaluate the education. Team members and stakeholders will have to work together to support the growth of the new graduate nurses. By looking at the opportunities and benefits of this type of education leadership partners, the overall lasting impact it can make on retention rates and patient care outcomes can be shown.

Chapter IV: Project Design

This project is designed to enhance the communication of new graduate nurses with an innovative and interactive learning experience. Research shows the importance of new graduate residency programs and education (Walsh, 2018). Materials for this project will be used to encourage new graduate nurse interaction and application of concepts. Hands-on learning concepts will be used to engage learners. A detailed timeline will lay a blueprint for project development and support project organization. Throughout the planning and implementation, feedback from partners and stakeholders will be used to continually improve the project. Evaluation from new graduate nurses will be used to determine successes and opportunities for improvements.

Goals and Objectives

The first objective for this project is for participants to identify and describe key elements of each section of the situation, background, assessment, and recommendation (SBAR) communication template. New graduate nurses will be presented with an interactive learning experience where each element will be broken down and described. The learning will begin with a self-evaluation from the new graduate nurses on their ability to communicate well. Next, New graduate nurses will apply elements of the SBAR format to non-clinical communication situations by creating a mock communication based on a given topic. New graduate nurses will be given a topic related to their current field. New graduate nurses will then be allowed to collaborate in a small group discussion and create a sample communication to be sent to a specified audience. After time to discuss and format their example, the new graduate nurses will come back together as a group to review the important elements of each section and how they apply

to the given scenario. The goal of this project is for participants to demonstrate increased confidence in communication skills during a post education evaluation. New graduate nurses will rate their impression of the education and perception of their learning. New graduate nurses will be asked to rate their confidence in their ability to identify, apply, and utilize SBAR formatting to communicate needs.

Material Development

In the project proposal meeting with the project partner and stakeholders a slide deck presentation will be used to outline the project goals and intended timeline. The slide deck will clearly outline the project plan, goals, and competencies. Feedback from the members will be used to develop a slide deck presentation for the new graduate nurses. The slide deck will be designed to promote new graduate nurse interaction and engage learners. Research shows utilizing animations and discussions in the presentation can increase learner attentiveness and satisfaction (Prince, 2019). Classroom resources will include a slide deck in Microsoft PowerPoint, a new graduate nurse worksheet, and an evaluation in Microsoft Forms.

After a brief introduction, the new graduate nurses will take a short survey using a QR code. The survey will have the new graduate nurses self-assess their competency in communication and identify a need for education. Once the new graduate nurses have completed the pre-course survey, they will be presented with a slide deck on SBAR communication. The slide deck will break down each element of the topic and relate to new graduate nurse use. The new graduate nurses will be asked questions and challenged to critically think during the presentation. By asking questions and promoting discussion, learning will be better solidified. Once content is presented the new graduate nurses will

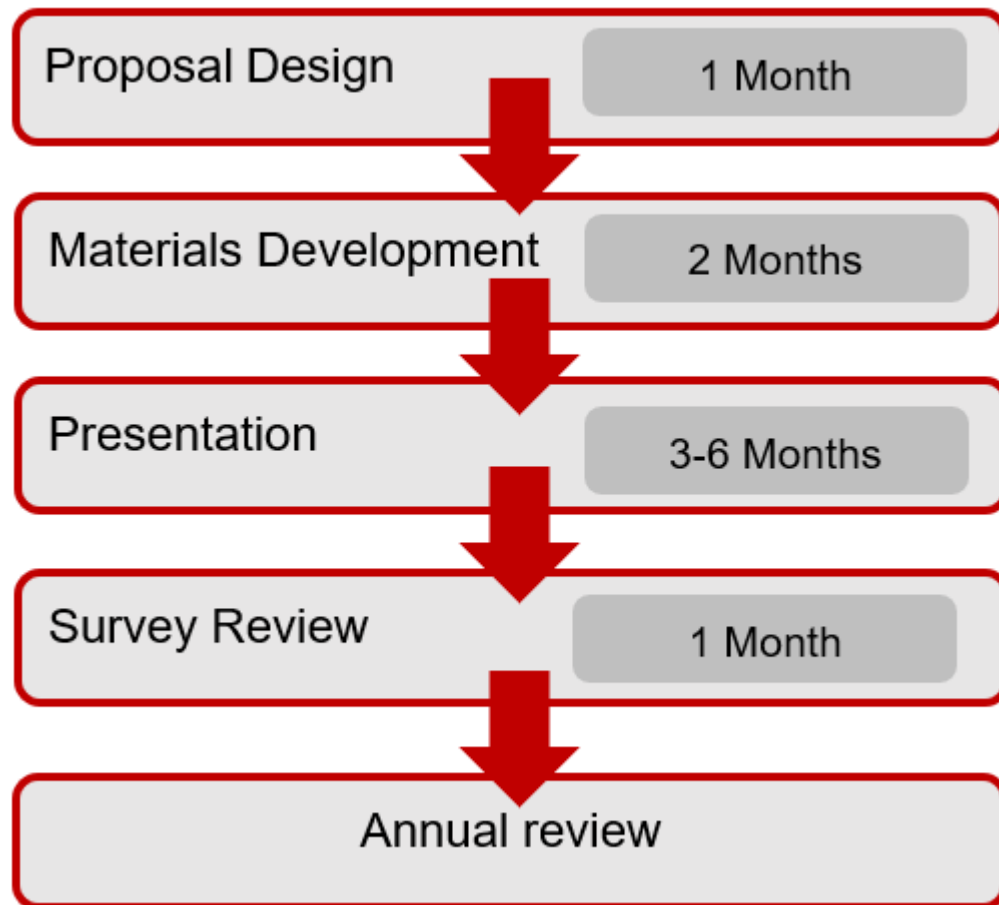
then have a chance to practice their newly learned skills. The new graduate nurses will be allowed to work in groups to identify a problem and apply SBAR formatting. The project leader and project partners will round to answer questions and support as needed. There will be pre-selected topics to ensure course flow.

During the presentation, the new graduate nurses will have a learning worksheet to fill out. The worksheet will serve as a method of engagement as new graduate nurses will have to pay attention to get all the needed information. The post-course evaluation will be taken by new graduate nurses after the course to measure outcomes. The post-course survey will ask the new graduate nurses to provide feedback on the learning, instructor, presentation, and application. The results will be reviewed and used to improve for future usage in the new graduate nursing program.

Timeline and Plan

Figure 2

Timeline and Plan



The project idea will be presented to key stakeholders and sponsors before planning will begin. The attendees of the meeting will be presented with the current research and information on communication needs for new graduate nurses. During this meeting, the attendees will be able to ask questions and propose goals for the project. The project leader will ask the team members to describe their vision for the education and expected outcomes. After the meeting, the attendees will be encouraged to reach out to the project leader with any ideas and suggestions to allow for interdepartmental

participation. The leaders will be asked to schedule time for educational implementation to ensure participants are not scheduled in staffing those days. The project leader and track coordinators from the critical care, emergency management, and acute care tracks will work together to set dates and times. One month will be allotted to prepare and schedule the educational implementation. After the project proposal has been accepted the project leader will assimilate the ideas into a cohesive educational plan. Frequent progress meetings will be set to keep all members up to date on progress. Two months will be allotted for planning and establishing education. Implementation will take place over three to six months. During this time, the education will be presented to new graduate nurses in person using evidence-based teaching strategies to promote learning and application. New graduate nurses will be asked to take a post-course evaluation to rate aspects of the learning for future improvement needs. Evaluation will be anonymous to eliminate the fear of retaliation bias. During the maintenance and development phase, feedback from the facility and new graduate nurses will be used to improve education. There is no set time frame for this piece as growth is a continual process.

Budget

Table 2

Participant Cost Breakdown

Time Category	Est. time (hours)	# Of participants	Cost (Per hour)	Estimated cost (\$)
Leadership meeting	1	10	\$51.25	\$512.50
Educational offering	1	30	\$24.08	\$722.40
Leadership time for education	1	10	\$51.25	\$512.50

Table 3*Materials Cost Breakdown*

Educational Material	Copies needed	Pages	Cost (per unit)	Estimated cost (\$)
New graduate nurse Worksheet	40	2	0.57	\$45.60
Presentation slide deck	1	15	0.57	\$8.55

The average salary of a Clinical Service Line Educator is \$106,600 (Salary.com, n.d.). The hourly breakdown is approximately \$51.25 if they work 40 hours a week in a 52-week year. For the proposal meeting, an estimated 10 leaders will attend costing the project \$512.50 for a 1-hour meeting. The same cost will apply to the one hour educational offering. The average nurse salary for new graduate registered nurses (RN) in North Carolina is \$24.08 (nursingprocess.org, 2022). For each registered nurse (RN) to be compensated for the time the project budget will need to include payment for time spent in education. The projected timeframe for this education will be one hour. If thirty new graduate nurses participate \$722.40 will be needed to support them. Technology resources will include Microsoft PowerPoint, Excel, and Forms for educational development. These will not cost the project because they are part of the project leader's graduate school access. Printed materials are outlined in Table 2 and include the new graduate nurse worksheets and a printed copy of the side deck for the presenter.

Printed materials will cost the project \$0.57 per colored page (Staples.com, n.d.). The budget accounted for 30 new graduates and the ten leaders to receive educational materials of two pages each totaling \$45.60. The project leader will have a slide deck

with annotations printed for ease of presentation. The slide deck is 15 slides and will cost \$8.55 to print in color. Items not considered in the budget are room reservation, technology, and project leader time. Room reservation for education will not cost the project because there is a dedicated learning space for the new graduate nurses. The technology required to create, implement, and review the education is available as part of the project leader's graduate course studies.

Evaluation Plan

Evaluation of the education will be based on new graduate nurse and faculty feedback. New graduate nurses will be given a pre-course and post-course survey to complete. Evaluation will be based on new graduate nurses' perception of improvement and confidence in tool utilization. The new graduate nurses will be asked to rate statements related to understanding and confidence in communicating before and after the presentation. Information will be in a numerical format to allow for analysis. New graduate nurses will rate the statements in the pre and post-course survey using a Likert scale; 5- strongly agree, 4- agree, 3- neutral, 2- disagree, and 1- strongly disagree. Additionally, the project leader and stakeholders will assess new graduate nurse performance in the small group activity by collecting the new graduate nurse worksheets for review. After all evaluation data has been reviewed it will be presented in a post-education meeting.

Summary

New graduate nurses' ability to identify and apply an SBAR format to communicate an identified problem with increased confidence in communication is the end goal of this project. The interdepartmental collaboration will be used to design,

implement, and evaluate this project. New graduate nurses will receive an interactive learning experience designed to engage new graduate nurses and promote critical thinking. As part of the education, new graduate nurses will take a pre-course and post-course survey to identify learning needs and improve learner confidence. A focus on evaluation will be important to ensure any opportunities for improvement are addressed.

Chapter V: Dissemination

New graduate nurses face many challenges when transitioning to clinical practice. Educators and researchers have identified communication as a learning need for new graduate nurses (Song & McCreary, 2020). The purpose of this project is to educate new graduate nurses on the importance of clear communication and how to apply situation, background assessment, and recommendation (SBAR) format to non-clinical needs (Owens & Keller, 2018). A structured format for presenting needs was created with the goal of increasing student confidence and competency (Oliveira & Brown, 2020). Research supports the need for new graduate education in effective communication by using SBAR format to improve messages (Kavanagh & Szweda, 2017). Typically thought of for patient reports in the healthcare setting, SBAR format can be applied to other situations as a method of providing a clear, structured message (Jurns, 2019).

Dissemination Activity

Before presenting information to the new graduate nurses the project was first presented to a new graduate program leader and two other system educators who work closely with new graduate nurses. The educators reviewed the proposal and provided feedback on adjustments to serve the team. The educators were excited to see the information and slide deck for the student presentation. The TTP program coordinator discussed wording and presentation elements with the project leader. Few changes were made to the presentation slide deck. The goal of student participation was an important element of this learning activity. The leaders wanted to ensure the students felt safe to ask questions and were provided with ample time to apply the concepts in case scenarios.

The education was presented to twenty-seven new graduate registered nurses and the critical care new graduate residency program coordinator. The new graduate nurses were from intensive care units in the hospital system and have been working for around five months. Students were engaged in a slide deck presentation on applying SBAR to non-clinical situations. After a brief introduction, the students took a survey where they were challenged to think about their current mindset on communication. The pre-course survey was designed to determine where the new graduate nurses perceived their confidence and proficiency in communication skills. The survey identified student interest in the topic of enhancing communication and outlined the need for education on communication formats. The results of the survey are outlined in Table 4. Students rated the importance of communication skills in their work as 4.7 out of 5, where 1 represented strongly disagree and 5 represented strongly agree. When asked if the students self-identified a need to develop communication skills the survey showed a score of 4.4 out of a maximum of 5 indicating new graduate nurses identify communication as a learning need. The lowest scored item on the pre-course survey was the comfort new graduate nurses have in discussing department needs with management. The survey average was 2.5 for this section identifying new graduate nurses do not have comfort in communicating with management. As the new graduate nurses gain clinical experience, they will likely discover department needs. Having the confidence to communicate with management is vital to becoming a professional nurse.

The presentation reviewed the familiar concepts of SBAR and expanded the scope to include non-clinical applications. The participants were given a blank template to fill out during the presentation. By the end of the presentation, the students had a format for

communication they could take with them. The format included a definition of each section along with key questions to guide the participants. A discussion was held on the challenges in providing a recommendation to leadership due to lack of clinical experience. The presentation provided the participants with an example scenario and SBAR so participants could see how the concepts came to fruition. The participants were then given an example scenario to create their own communication in small groups. Working in groups the participants created an example of communication using the template they created. The participants were encouraged to be creative in their problem-solving. Sufficient time was given for participants to create the communication and classroom discussion focused on structuring their message and coming up with a creative solution to the problem. The project leader presented an example response to the scenario and the new graduate nurses discussed the similarities and differences in their attempts.

Feedback from the project is outlined in Table 5 and was overwhelmingly positive. The new graduate nurses rated the application of this education to their clinical practice as a 4.75 suggesting the education was very relevant to their working environment. An important part of educating is ensuring the classroom is a safe space to learn (Lyman et al., 2020). The new graduate nurses rated the psychological safety of the presentation as 4.8 out of 5. Research supports when students feel safe to ask questions, they can learn better (Lyman et al., 2020). The new graduate nurses indicated the education was engaging, clear, and applicable to their clinical practice and they plan to use the communication skills within practice.

Table 4*Pre-Course Survey Results*

Which practice setting do you work?	Communication skills are important to my work	I identify areas of my communication that need improvement	Formatting my thoughts for clear communication is difficult	I would like to develop my communication skills	Having a communication format to follow would benefit me	I would be interested in learning more about enhancing my communication skills	I have excellent communication skills with my patients	I have excellent communication skills with my coworkers	I am comfortable identifying patient care needs and advocating for my patient	I am comfortable discussing department needs with management	I can easily organize my thoughts into a message for others to understand	I have a method to format my thoughts, so my communication is clear
Critical Care	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Critical Care	5	2	2	5	4	5	2	4	4	2	4	2
Critical Care	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	2	3	2
Critical Care	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	2	3
Critical Care	5	5	3	5	4	5	3	4	4	3	3	4
Critical Care	5	4	2	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3
Critical Care	5	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	3	2
Critical Care	5	2	1	4	3	3	3	3	4	2	3	3
Critical Care	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	4	4
Critical Care	5	4	3	4	4	5	3	4	4	2	3	3
Critical Care	5	5	4	5	5	5	3	3	3	2	3	2
Critical Care	5	5	4	5	5	5	3	3	3	2	3	3
Critical Care	5	5	3	5	5	4	3	4	3	3	3	4
Critical Care	5	5	3	5	5	5	3	5	4	3	3	4
Critical Care	5	4	2	5	5	5	3	4	4	3	3	4
Critical Care	5	5	3	5	5	5	3	3	4	2	3	2
Critical Care	5	3	3	3	4	5	3	3	3	2	4	1
Critical Care	1	2	4	2	3	1	3	3	3	4	2	2
Critical Care	5	4	3	5	5	5	3	4	2	2	2	1
Critical Care	5	4	3	5	5	5	4	4	4	2	3	2
Critical Care	5	5	2	5	5	5	4	3	5	2	3	3
Critical Care	5	4	3	5	5	5	4	3	4	2	4	3
Critical Care	5	5	4	5	5	5	2	4	4	4	2	2
Critical Care	5	2	1	3	4	4	4	4	3	1	4	4
Critical Care	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	3	3	2	3	3
Critical Care	5	5	1	5	5	5	3	3	3	3	4	4
Critical Care	5	4	2	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	4
Critical Care	5	3	3	4	5	5	4	3	4	3	3	3
Average	4.7	4	3	4.4	4.6	4.5	3.3	3.5	3.6	2.5	3.2	2.8

Table 5*Post-Course Survey Results*

	The educational activity met my expectations	The educational activity is applicable to my current role	The educational activity gave me the tools to communicate better	The content was presented clearly	The presentation was interactive and engaging	The presenter was prepared and knowledgeable	I plan to use this in my practice setting	I felt comfortable asking any questions I may have had
	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4
	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	4	4	5	5	5	3	5
	5	4	4	5	5	5	3	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	3	4	4	4	4	5	4	4
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4
	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	4
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Averages	4.75	4.75	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.9	4.7	4.75

Limitations

Limitations for this project included time, survey size, and inability for follow up. The first major limitation of this project was the timeline for the presentation. The presentation to the new graduates had to be scheduled to accommodate the work and school schedule of the project leader as well as the students. Due to the limited timeline, fewer new graduates were able to participate in the project. The project was also limited by the inability to reevaluate competency and confidence after a designated period. Ideally, the participants would have check-ins over the next year to determine the practicality and usage of the communication format. The comments from the post-course survey indicated the new graduates desired more out of the education through more scenarios and time for application. After presenting the new graduate nurses with the education the project leader would ideally follow up with the new graduate nurses and their leadership to determine if the students used the format and if the leadership identified increased confidence and proficiency in communicating. The application of the education could not be fully studied in the time frame for this project and leaves room for future research to support the professional development of new graduate nurses.

Implications for Nursing

The overwhelmingly positive response to this education is just one of the many reasons this type of education needs to be prioritized for new graduate nurses. If nursing leaders want nurses to function at the best of their abilities, then time and resources must be prioritized to include education on all aspects of clinical practice. It is easy for nursing leadership to identify clinical improvement needs for things such as Catheter-Associated Urinary Tract Infections (CAUTIs) or Central Line-Associated Bloodstream Infections (CLABSIs). There is ample research to demonstrate poor communication can impact outcomes yet there is little educational

focus on those skills. The current healthcare environment is complex and new graduate nurses often become burnt out by the high demands and lack of perceived support. The future of nursing care is new graduate nurses. Leadership must prioritize their development to improve retention, patient outcomes, and provider confidence. Provider confidence and proficiency are linked to improved patient outcomes.

Recommendations

Recommendations for this project include continued development of education of “soft skills”, creation of an asynchronous education module, and presentation to other healthcare workers. Using SBAR format to improve communication skills is the beginning of the professional tools new graduate nurses need (Song & McCreary, 2020). Often overlooked in training, soft skills include other topics like critical thinking, teamwork, and professionalism. To meet the demands of a large healthcare system, this education could be created in a module format to be assigned to new graduates. The benefit to this is the convenience of online education. The limitation would be the hands-on practice portion. The project leader recommends the creation of a module to provide the information to learners followed by an in-person simulation to practice these skills. Ideally, this education would be one part of a larger educational offering on the professional development of nurses and other healthcare workers. While new graduate nurses were the focus of this project, other healthcare professionals could benefit from this education.

Conclusion

This project outlined the importance of comprehensive new graduate education for nursing practice. New graduate education is vital to creating a strong foundation for nursing professional development (Kavanagh & Szweda, 2017). New graduate nurses require time and

resources to promote positive patient outcomes and increase retention. The ability of a new graduate nurse to communicate clearly and concisely is imperative to reducing medical errors and promoting a safe environment (Kostoff et al., 2016). Through an interactive learning experience, new graduate nurses were able to demonstrate an increased confidence in communication skills in a short time frame. Expansion of this project has the potential to impact nurse retention, patient safety, and increase involvement for policy change.

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