TEACHING GERIATRIC NURSING CONCEPTS USING A SIMULATED MEDICAL-SURGICAL SETTING

Contact author:
Sally Miller, RN, MS
Director, Skills and Simulation Lab
Vanderbilt School of Nursing
Godchaux Hall 316
461 21st Ave South
Nashville, TN 37240
USA
sally.m.miller@vanderbilt.edu
(615)322-4894 (office)
(615)343-7788 (fax)

Maria Overstreet, PhD (c), RN, CCNS
Assistant Professor
Godchaux Hall 303
Vanderbilt School of Nursing
461 21st Ave South
Nashville, TN 37240
USA
maria.overstreet@vanderbilt.edu
(615)936-0228 (office)
(615)343-7788 (fax)

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Integrating simulation and other technologies into geriatric nursing curriculum
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Sally Miller, RN, MS
Maria Overstreet, PhD (c), RN, CCNS
Vanderbilt School of Nursing

Background
Simulation is increasingly being used to supplement ‘authentic’ patient contact in nursing education and provides opportunities to expose students to common or high risk patient situations in a safe, low risk setting. Simulation is ideal to teach the complex care of older adult patients.

Objectives
To enhance the geriatric content of a BSN program, simulation mannequins in a ten bed skills lab have been transformed to resemble older adult patients with chronic and acute conditions commonly encountered in a medical-surgical setting. Several of the mannequins are made to resemble patients from the Hartford Try This video series which are viewed as part of the simulation. The objectives of the three hour simulation session are based on the Hartford Competencies: Care of Adults 65+. Leadership and management principles and clinical decision making are also emphasized during the simulation.

Process
Six senior students participate in the simulation at a time. The three hour session begins with a review of objectives and simulation guidelines. Students are then randomly assigned the role of charge nurse, staff nurse or resource nurse. After receiving report they begin their care which includes performing assessments and administering medications.

While providing routine care to the mannequins, students respond to “situations” inserted into the simulation including patient status changes such as acute confusion, vital sign abnormalities, medication reactions or abnormal lab results. Faculty and staff from the School of Nursing are called in to act as family or interdisciplinary team members who request information or discuss care issues with students. Students must manage their time, prioritize care, make bedside decisions and communicate professionally.

Results
The simulation concludes with a debriefing session using guided reflection. Students discuss their initial responses, challenges encountered and how they adapted their care and interventions for the older adult. Evaluations of the experience have been extremely positive and show growing awareness of caring for older adults and increased confidence in managing patient care.

Keywords: geriatric, simulation, nursing, Hartford Competencies