



Teaching EBP Column

Mock Nursing Research and Evidence-Based Practice Conference to Support Learning in Pre-Licensure Nursing Students

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This column shares the best evidence-based strategies and innovative ideas on how to facilitate the learning and implementation of EBP principles and processes by clinicians as well as nursing and interprofessional students. Guidelines for submission are available at [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1741-6787](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1741-6787)

BACKGROUND

Evidence-based practice (EBP) is an essential element of quality nursing care and education programs. However, nursing students do not seem to grasp the importance of learning EBP, as evidenced by a lack of competency in their clinical roles (Melnik et al., 2018). Within the seven steps in the EBP process (Table 1), it was found that nursing students' most needed improvement is with the competencies of "critical appraisal of published research" and "evaluation and synthesis of evidence" (Melnik, Fineout-Overholt, Stillwell, & Williamson, 2010; Melnik et al., 2018).

One common way to teach critical appraisal skills and evaluation of evidence competencies is through the use of journal clubs (Ahmadi et al., 2012). Journal clubs are educational tools used to foster critical appraisal skills, encourage EBP, and disseminate new findings, typically through discussion of an article (Topf et al., 2017). This teaching strategy has been around since the mid-1800s and has since taken on a number of forms, ranging from face-to-face meetings to interactions via online, social media platforms (Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 2017; Topf et al., 2017). Incorporating the concepts of the journal club, this column will describe an innovating teaching strategy using a live "mock" nursing research and EBP conference in a pre-licensure nursing program. The objectives were to (a) engage students in current nursing research and EBP and (b) develop their critical appraisal and evaluation skills.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGY

Whereas traditional journal clubs discuss current, published literature (Topf et al., 2017), the mock conference included presentations on projects currently in process by PhD and DNP students. The mock conference took place

during the EBP course in a pre-licensure nursing program halfway through the semester. The beginning of the semester was spent providing an overview of the EBP process using the Iowa Model of EBP as a guide (Buckwalter et al., 2017). As an integral component of EBP, much didactic time was spent reviewing non-research and research methodologies and how to critically appraise articles. Standard critical appraisal tools that also include clear descriptions and directions on how to assess an article's level and quality were used to further guide students (Dearholt & Dang, 2012). The concepts of validity, reliability, and applicability of evidence were discussed in didactic lectures, and examples were provided by the course faculty.

Course faculty served as the moderator for the conference. Each presenter had 15 min to discuss their project, with time allotted for questions. Presenters were at various stages in their projects, ranging from beginning protocol development to finalized results, with a variety of methodologies and topics presented.

METHODS USED TO EVALUATE OUTCOMES

Brochures with presenters' biographies and evaluation forms were distributed to students. Within the brochures, students were asked to rate presentations on a 5-point Likert scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). This provided students with experience in evaluating speakers, a component of real nursing conferences. Evaluations were provided to the presenters for feedback. To improve the students' critical appraisal and evaluation skills, students were asked to (a) identify the methodology used, (b) describe the overall purpose, (c) describe the population and setting, and (d) describe how outcomes were measured. Lastly, students were asked to rate the overall mock conference on the same 5-point Likert scale.

Table 1. Seven Steps of the EBP Process

Step 0	Cultivate a spirit of inquiry
Step 1	Ask the clinical questions in PICOT format
Step 2	Search for the best evidence
Step 3	Critically appraise the evidence
Step 4	Integrate the evidence with clinical expertise and patient preferences/values
Step 5	Evaluate the outcomes of the practice decisions or changes based on evidence
Step 6	Disseminate EBP results

RESULTS

Review of the evaluations demonstrated that students had a grasp of critical appraisal and evaluation of the presented projects through correct identification of the methodologies used, purpose, population and setting, and outcomes. Overall, student evaluations of the mock conference were very positive. The average score given for the summer 2018 conference was 4.6/5 (n = 59); for spring 2019, 4.3/5 (n = 62); and for summer 2019, 4.6/5 (n = 60). Comments indicated that students found the mock conference beneficial to their understanding of research and appraisal and evaluation skills, as well as sparked their own interests:

I thought this was super interesting and a great way to solidify some of the research concepts we have been learning!

It gave us examples in what we are studying, while giving students a chance to practice presentations on their research. Great collaboration!

This was a great experience. As a student interested in research, this mock conference sparked further interest into future work. The presenters' enthusiasm for their work is contagious!

This conference was helpful in demonstrating multiple facets of 'real-world' application of research and EBP.

PhD and DNP students commented that they appreciated the opportunity to practice presenting their projects and that it gave them confidence and helpful feedback for the future. The mock conference, a new twist on the journal club, was a mutually beneficial activity that improved pre-licensure students' critical appraisal and evaluation skills and provided a forum for PhD and DNP students

to practice presenting their project. Based off of feedback from the first mock conference, a PhD and DNP student panel was added where pre-licensure students could ask questions about the two doctoral programs. Future conferences may expand to add faculty and clinicians from the health system, as well as poster presentations.

The mock conference for pre-licensure nursing students integrates concepts from the effective journal club strategy and is a relatively simple way to expose students to EBP and research. It helps improve critical appraisal and evaluation skills through "real-life" examples and provides PhD and DNP students with an opportunity to practice presenting. This innovative teaching strategy can be tailored to fit the needs of various nursing programs to improve students' critical appraisal and evaluation skills. **WVN**



LINKING EVIDENCE TO ACTION

- Pre-licensure students often struggle with the EBP competencies of "critical appraisal of published research" and "evaluation and synthesis of evidence"; journal clubs are a common way to improve these skills.
- Nursing students in doctoral programs may benefit from practicing presenting their projects.
- Hosting an innovative version of journal clubs through the use of live "mock" conferences for pre-licensure nursing students is a simple, innovative teaching strategy that is mutually beneficial for students in multiple programs.

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