

Poster presentation:

Progress towards creating a benchmark for numeracy for nursing

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Abstract

In this poster we shall illustrate our progress on an inter-disciplinary project funded by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) in which we aim to establish a benchmark for numeracy in nursing at point of registration. Numeracy is acknowledged to be a key competence for professional practice in nursing (Hutton, 1997) and an important aspect of patient safety. Since September 2008, the body regulating the profession in the UK (the Nursing and Midwifery Council, NMC) requires nursing students to achieve 100% in a test of numeracy in practice (NMC, 2007) before achieving registration as nurses, yet there are currently no national standards for the assessment of numeracy during pre-registration nurse training. We aim to create a framework for a benchmark in this Scotland based study.

In Phase 1 we established the case for creating a benchmark, explored key issues in determining the achievement of competence in nursing numeracy and developed principles for the proposed benchmark (Coben et al., 2008). We then conducted a pilot study with pre-registration nursing students in a large university school of nursing in order to test the efficacy of a computer-based assessment of one key aspect of numeracy for nursing: medication calculation. We compared assessments in two different forms of simulation of reality: outcomes from the computer-based assessment were compared with calculations presented in a practical setting. The pilot also acted as a test of the research design: a quasi-experimental cross-over design in which half the participants were exposed to the computer-based assessment before undertaking the practical tasks, while the other half were exposed to the practical tasks before the computer-based assessment. In Phase 2 we conducted a study with nursing students in selected universities in Scotland. We shall present the outcomes of the study to date and our plans for future work towards creating a benchmark.

References

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