Development of Undergraduate Nursing Student Competence in COMMUNITY HEALTH CLINICAL

To what degree are nursing students being prepared for community health nursing practice through their community health clinical rotations?

In an Alberta-wide study asking senior nursing students, community health nurses, and community health faculty to rate the observed and desired competence level of senior nursing students, observed competence scores were significantly lower than desired scores on all 43 competencies.

Perspectives of Student Competence in Community Health

Students who were preceptored in their community health clinical experience felt significantly more prepared for community health roles than those who experienced non-traditional clinical placements.

Respondent groups (nurses, faculty and students) each have different beliefs about:

1. Readiness for Practice
2. Orientation to Learning
3. Foundations of Practice
4. Future of Practice

For more information, please see "Achievement of Community Health Nursing Competencies through Undergraduate Clinical Experiences: A Gap Analysis" by Em M. Pijl-Zieber (2015)
Once the gap emerged in the quantitative data, the nature of the gap between observed and desired competence level of senior nursing students and new graduates in community health areas was explored through focus group interviews with senior nursing students, community health faculty, and community health nurses across Alberta. Practicing community health nurses, faculty and students have different views on:
- Readiness to practice
- Foundations of community nursing practice
- The role of critical thinking
- Orientation to learning
- The future of nursing practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
<th>NURSES</th>
<th>FACULTY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>READINESS TO PRACTICE</strong> entails...</td>
<td>Being in possession of basic nursing knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Being in possession of basic nursing knowledge and skills to enable meaningful interaction with patient</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FOUNDATIONS OF COMMUNITY NURSING PRACTICE</strong> are...</td>
<td>Basic nursing knowledge and skills for daily work of nurses</td>
<td>Assessment, pathophysiology, pharmacology, epidemiology, and interpersonal skills</td>
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<td><strong>THE ROLE OF CRITICAL THINKING</strong> is...</td>
<td>Subservient to skill and knowledge acquisition</td>
<td>Part of a trinity that includes the competent application of skills and knowledge in new situations</td>
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<td><strong>ORIENTATION TO LEARNING</strong> is primarily...</td>
<td>Concrete and focused on how to ‘do’; emphasis on maximizing exposure to multiple nursing roles</td>
<td>Integrative; the abstract meets the concrete in the patient encounter; desire that students have an authentic exposure to community practice</td>
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<td><strong>THE FUTURE OF NURSING PRACTICE</strong> is...</td>
<td>In community but unable to specify what roles might look like</td>
<td>In community, with more of the existing roles (especially public health and home care)</td>
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