

Exploring the Role of Weblogs in Supporting Undergraduate Nursing Students during Clinical Practicum

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Purpose of the Study

Clinical practicum is a valuable experiential learning for undergraduate nursing students. However, evidence showed that nursing students were three times more stressful in clinical learning than in classroom learning due to unfamiliar working environment, lack of professional knowledge and clinical skills. In the 21st century, integration of computer technology becomes an innovative way in education. Borrowing the idea from social support group in clinical setting, the study aims at exploring whether blogging can provide social support to students and help them in coping with stress during clinical practicum.

Methods

Fifty-seven students participated in this study. They were divided into groups of eight to nine students and worked in different hospitals for their clinical practicum for 60 days over three different time periods from June 2007 to August 2008. Qualitative design was used to identify the themes from students' weblogs by thematic analysis. In total, 99 weblogs were downloaded and analyzed.

Results

Findings showed that blogging provided a platform for students to seek for social support and to give social support to others during clinical practicum. Themes identified from student weblogs were asking questions, sharing happiness and unhappiness, self-reflection on performance, sharing views on life and death, sharing clinical knowledge and sympathetic messages to others.

Conclusion

Weblogs were able to support undergraduate nursing students during clinical practicum via an innovative way. Different individuals have different needs and experience different stressors during their clinical practicum. Blogging serves as a social support buffer to meet their individual needs.

Keywords

Nursing education, blogging, social support, information technology
