

The Impact of Replacing a Year-One Undergraduate Nursing Family Assessment Home Visit Clinical Placement with Virtual Simulation on Nursing Student Family Centered Care Competence: A Protocol for A Randomized Controlled Trial

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Across 27 countries, close to one in three people over the age of 15 live with chronic conditions, many of which are preventable. Chronic illness impacts family systems and families have a profound impact on the health of an individual and course of chronic illnesses. Addressing the needs of families during care planning prevents readmissions, promotes adherence to care, mitigates family caregiver stress, and improves patient and family quality of life. Nursing students usually learn how to care for people and their families through in-person family visits. For many reasons, it is difficult to keep everyone safe and make sure students get quality education during in-home family visits. Simulated learning may better prepare students to be nurses, compared to in-person visits in family homes.

Simulation is an effective way to teach knowledge and practical skills. One way is through virtual simulations, which are scenarios that are offered digitally on a computer or over the internet. Due to concerns over the ability to find placements during the pandemic, more educators are using virtual simulations to replace in-person placements and may continue to use them after the pandemic due to their flexibility, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I replaced 10 hours of clinical time with virtual simulations in a first-year family assessment course. It remains unknown if virtual simulations can safely replace clinical time due to limited evidence measuring their impact on learner competence. Yet, there is also no evidence supporting the effectiveness of traditional clinical placements for learning. The aim of this randomized controlled trial will be to test the impact of virtual simulation when compared to in-person home visits on the family centered care competence of undergraduate nursing students. Prior to this trial, new simulations informed by the pilot testing phase will be created.

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