Coaching ‘Oscar’ performances out of Millennial healthcare students in simulated learning environments

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1. ABSTRACT
There is often heated debate as to the effectiveness of undergraduate nursing education to remain relevant and keep abreast of both societal and healthcare expectations. Students are being required to “hit the ground running,” capable of managing increasingly complex and life-threatening situations with little or no “hands-on” preparation. The aim of this research is to explore ways to maximise simulated learning environments which mimic actual life-threatening situations in a manner which allows students to progress from novices to expert. An action research methodology using three cycles of investigation is used to explore how to coach an ‘Oscar’ performance out of Millennial (18-30 years) nursing students.

Students in this research reported that simulation as a pedagogy is the preferred classroom for Millennials due to its immersive qualities, ability to require application of theory directly to practice, multi-tasking tendencies, use of teamwork, and tie to technology. Simulation provides the perfect mix of technology and realism in a manner which is effective in preparing students for the complex clinical environments they are destined for in today’s healthcare.

2. BACKGROUND—WHAT HAS CHANGED IN NURSING EDUCATION?
Undergraduate nursing education has transitioned from apprentice-based training in hospitals to baccalaureate education in tertiary institutions. This transition has resulted in a distancing from clinical environments with an increase in theoretical knowledge not necessarily tied to clinical contexts.
- The delivery of content in undergraduate nursing programmes has not changed to match the preferred classroom of the largest generation ever to enter the tertiary setting—the Millennials (18-30 years of age).
- Theoretical concepts are learned in isolation from clinical contexts.
- Skills training is often done in isolation with little clinical reasoning or rationale as to when/where it should be instigated.
- A widening knowledge-practice gap exists within linkages between the two.
- Mandatory clinical hours do not ensure all students uniform exposure to deteriorating situations and how to best manage these.
- Students are entering professional practice with a limited ability to communicate deteriorating situations in a manner which will result in assistance from other multi-professionals.
- Simulation as a pedagogy has the ability to assist in all of the above when used to its maximum potential.

3. OBJECTIVE
The aim of this research is to learn how to maximize simulated learning environments for Millennial (18-30 year old) undergraduate nursing students.

4. METHODS
The methods employed in this technical action research project included:
- Cycle #1: Focus groups and filmed simulation learning event with debriefing (n=15)
- Cycle #2: Pre- and post-simulation questionnaires (n=125)
- Cycle #3: Pre- and post-tests (n=21), focus groups (2), and evaluation of performance using Lasater simulation rubric

5. RESULTS ACTION CYCLE #2
125 millennial students completed pre- and post-questionnaires around preferences in simulated learning.

6. RESULTS ACTION CYCLE #3
Students in third-year undergraduate progressed through a simulation suite (pre- post test, Lasater rubric evaluation, and focus group feedback).
- Students improved in mean pre- and post-tests scores after participating in scenarios.
- Students also improved in average Lasater Rubric scores (SD) as they progressed through the scenarios in sequence.
- Focus group themes indicated that the students enjoyed watching their progress and could sense their improvement as they progressed through the simulation suite. They resonate with this kind of learning.

7. CONCLUSIONS
- Millennials possess certain traits which make simulated learning particularly effective for their education.
- Millennials value an opportunity to repeat the SLE, view a model clip, get supportive yet concise feedback, and work in teams.
- Millennials as the ‘trophy generation’ love to see themselves improve through pre and post-tests, performance rubrics, or viewing clips of their ‘Oscar performances.’
- Clinical judgment and reasoning can be improved through the use of simulation in undergraduate nursing programs.