

# COVID-19 INNOVATION: WOC NURSING VIRTUAL CLINICAL PRACTICUM (VCP)



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**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Quality Improvement report is to disseminate findings of a novel Virtual Clinical Practicum for Wound, Ostomy, Continence (WOC) Nurse learners during the COVID-19 pandemic through an accredited WOC Nurse Education Program. The purpose of the Quality Improvement project was to provide a high quality Virtual Clinical Practicum (VCP) during the COVID-19 pandemic with experienced faculty preceptors.

**METHODS:** Open ended questions were asked of the first group of learners after completion of the Virtual Clinical Practicum at the WEB WOC Nursing Education Program. The most recurring themes from the first 62 learners were converted into 5-point Likert scale questions as the evaluation tool completed by 234 learners for a total of 296 learners. Faculty were queried and certification pass rates were calculated when the learner disclosed their name.

## OUTCOMES: LEARNERS REPORTED THAT THE REASON FOR SELECTING THE Virtual Clinical Practicum (VCP)

### ❖ ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19

- FACILITY COVID RESTRICTIONS NOT ALLOWING CLINICAL PRACTICUMS.: 53.37%

### ❖ NOT ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19

- DIFFICULTY FINDING A PRECEPTOR : 26.99% (in any scope)
- FACILITY RESTRICTIONS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19: 4.29%.
- OTHER: FACILITY RESTRICTIONS: ACCEPTING ONLY OWN EMPLOYEES AS STUDENTS, PRECEPTORS TOO DISTANT AND FAMILY OBLIGATIONS.: 15.34%



## RESPONSES TO OTHER QUESTIONS ON THE EVALUATION: N=296 Learners

5-point Likert Scale: 5 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree

- 1. The Virtual Clinical Practicum was rigorous:** 88.2% strongly agreed and agreed the Virtual Clinical Practicum was rigorous. Mean 4.39, Median 5.
- 2. Organization and Relevance to Clinical Practice:** 92.6% strongly agreed and agreed the Virtual Clinical Practicum was well organized and relevant to clinical practice. Mean 4.63, Median 5.
- 3. Application of Didactic Course Work:** 95% strongly agreed and agreed the Virtual Clinical Practicum helped to apply didactic course work to case studies with thought provoking problem solving. Mean 4.62, Median 5.
- 4. Comparison to another previous Clinical Practicum taken:**
  - 59% strongly agreed & agreed the VCP was better than most other Clinical Practicum previously taken. 5% were neutral which indicates the VCP was equal to most other Clinical Practicum previously taken. Thus 94% found the VCP was equal to or better than most other Clinical Practicum taken. 6.1% disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement primarily citing the need for direct patient hands on clinical. Mean 4.04, Median 4.
- 5. Choosing the Virtual Clinical Practicum (VCP) again even if COVID is NOT relevant?** (i.e., if I need to complete a Practicum when taking another scope of practice with WEB WOC).
  - 71.8% strongly agreed and agreed they would choose the VCP again even if COVID was not relevant. 14.1% were neutral which indicates choosing the VCP again remains an option, 85.9% would take or consider taking the VCP option in the future if needed., 14.1% disagreed and strongly disagreed they would consider taking the VCP option again primarily noting the desire for hands on direct patient care for practicum., Mean 4.15, Median 5.

## FACULTY PRECEPTOR EVALUATION:

- More control over the quality and evidence-based practice and case exemplars
- Evaluations were standardized thus; the evaluation process was felt to be fair and non-biased.
- Faculty preceptors found teaching VCP to be physically demanding, yet yielded strong learner engagement, learning and achievement of required competencies.
- Faculty preceptors agreed that a segment of learners will always require or desire an onsite clinical experience with direct hands-on learning.



**CERTIFICATION PASS RATE:** The difference between passing the certification exams between the traditional practicum and the VCP learners per scope were Wound, by an increased 16%, Ostomy, by an increased 18%, and Continence, by an increased 13%.

## CONCLUSION:

Completing a Clinical Practicum in the Specialty Practice of WOC Nursing has been a barrier to practice entry in the past, during COVID and still today. Covid-19 has presented an opportunity to innovate and provide virtual learning in theory and in the clinical practicum. The Virtual Clinical Practicum (VCP) offers another effective option for some learners. Through extensive evaluation, learners using virtual technology report positive outcomes as do faculty preceptors. Data available on certification test pass rates also support this teaching and evaluation approach. For those potential WOC Nurse Specialists fortunate enough to secure a preceptor with a patient census needed for application of knowledge, there will always be a place for bedside clinical practicum completion. However, decreasing barriers for accomplishing a clinical practicum is key to practice entry for learners choosing to become WOC Nursing Specialists. In a larger sense, is critical to evidence-based quality patient care and growth of the WOC Nursing profession

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