

PI46: BARRIERS TO ACCESS of Wound, Ostomy, and Contenance (WOC) NURSE SPECIALTY EDUCATION: A COVID-19 REFLECTION



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TOPIC/SIGNIFICANCE TO PRACTICE

The nursing shortage, lack of clinical teaching sites and lack of teaching faculty as well as age have presented barriers for entrance into nursing practice and, subsequently, nursing specialty practice. In recent studies from the NLN and AACN, it was reported that over a quarter of qualified RN applicants are denied admission to academic programs due to the **shortage of nursing faculty and clinical practicum sites**. Beyond the nursing shortage is the additional burden of nurses aging and retiring. The WOCN® Society reported in 2023 that 56% of its 6,070 members are 45 years or older. Based upon this information, the shortage of nurses and nurse specialists should only increase in the years ahead. Since all nurses entering the WOC Nursing Specialty have completed basic nursing practicums, a minimum of one year of nursing experience, and a bachelor's degree, they are experienced learners. The need for innovation in the delivery of a WOC clinical practicum is recognized.

PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE: Multiple barriers into WOC Nursing specialty were identified (see abstract and poster DISCUSSION for list) but the purpose of this poster is to report the primary barrier for entry into the WOC Nursing Specialty: The onsite clinical practicum. During the Covid-19 pandemic, innovation resulted in new ways to complete traditional learning. A 100% virtual clinical practicum (VCP) was developed in the WOC Nursing Specialty that avoided the need for learners who selected this option to complete an onsite clinical practicum. However, the 100% VCP was discontinued following the pandemic until additional evidence on its efficacy could be reported. In 2023, WEB WOC Nursing Education Program-reported favorable results from learners and preceptors with this experience. This poster will focus on the reasons learners selected the VCP and whether they would use the VCP again.

PROCESS/REPLICATION:

182 WOC Nursing learners completed a post-virtual clinical practicum survey with multiple choice questions and open-ended questions intended to obtain further information on the learner response. Multiple choice questions were scored using a 5-point Likert scale. The survey was administered in 2023, but the questions addressed here are related to the virtual clinical practicum completion.

RESULTS: 2023, N=182 learners

I CHOSE THE VIRTUAL CLINICAL PRACTICUM (VCP) BECAUSE OF:	%	#
FACILITY COVID RESTRICTIONS NOT ALLOWING CLINICAL PRACTICUMS when I had a deadline with my employer.	7.69%	14
FACILITY RESTRICTIONS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19	4.95%	9
DIFFICULTY FINDING A PRECEPTOR NOT DUE TO COVID-19	52.75%	96
OTHER	34.62%	63
FACILITY RESTRICTIONS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19 OR OTHER, PLEASE SPECIFY		78
		Answered 182

I WOULD CHOOSE THE VIRTUAL CLINICAL PRACTICUM (VCP) AGAIN EVEN IF COVID IS NOT RELEVANT?	%	#
Strongly Agree	76.37%	139
Agree	17.03%	31
Neutral	4.95%	9
Disagree	1.10%	2
Strongly Disagree	0.55%	1
		Answered 182

References:

- American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN). *Fact sheet: Nursing faculty shortage*. Updated October 2022. Accessed October 26, 2023. <https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/News/Factsheets/Faculty-Shortage-Factsheet.pdf#:~:text=According%20to%20AACN%E2%80%99s%20report%20on%202021-2022%20Enrollment%20and,sites%2C%20classroom%20space%2C%20clinical%20preceptors%2C%20and%20budget%20constraints>
- Hood M. Using lessons from the pandemic to reimagine health care. *American Hospital Association*. Published January 14, 2021. Accessed October 26, 2023.
- National League for Nursing. NLN Annual Survey of Schools of Nursing 2021-2022. *Infographics highlights. NLN DataViewTM*. Published September 25, 2023. Accessed October 26, 2023. <https://www.nln.org/nlnNews/newsroom/nursing-education-statistics>

DISCUSSION:

52.75% selected VCP because they were having difficulty locating a preceptor ... NOT a clinical facility. This is a barrier to accessing specialty education.

- 34.62% sited “other” - which we could classify as “lifestyle” choices plus note the problems related to preceptors is repeated.
 - Work schedule and time off, Inability to travel,
 - Located in a rural setting with the nearest preceptor 1 hour away,
 - Preceptor unable to meet qualifications, and
 - Facility restrictions, legal (i.e. only precept employees). Few stated this as a problem.

Of the learners who selected the VCP, notice that at least 93% would select it again. But some learners need face to face clinicals.

SUMMARY:

More learners are seeking lifestyle choices as they consider new careers such as being less able or willing to travel or live remotely compared to learners in the past. There will always be a place for face-to-face clinical practicums. Educators need to consider difficulty in locating preceptors for some learners and work/life balance when attracting learners which could preclude learners entering the WOC nursing specialty. *Utilizing innovations such as 100% VCP in education offers options for learning that resolve barriers to accessing nursing specialty education.*