

Navigating Online Nursing School Through the COVID-19 Pandemic

Lily Canterbury, Sydney Cotton, Stephanie Sturm
University of Cincinnati- College of Nursing

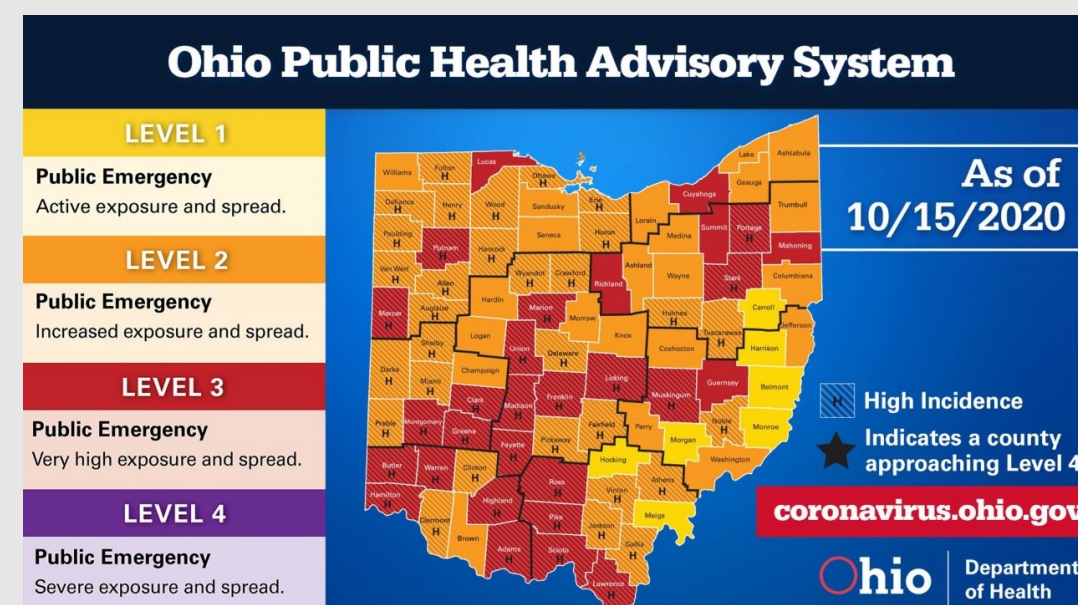
Introduction

Undeniably, the COVID-19 pandemic unearthed countless problems and unpreparedness in the context of a national emergency. On March 23rd, 2020, all unessential businesses closed, and schools moved to remote learning. Undergraduate students who chose traditional learning methods were forced to adapt to an online curriculum during a global pandemic, and individual universities were left scrambling to organize opportunities to continue remote learning. Not only were students struggling to create a learning environment within their own homes, but they also had to develop new educational methods and cope with stress while being socially isolated.

Purpose

This project intends to create a resource preparing BSN students for the future of online lectures and clinicals, as well as suggest recommendations for self-care to help ease the educational and emotional burden of the pandemic.

Develop an education session outlining main topics on how to be successful in the online learning environment



Literature Search

Databases:

- CINHAL
- PUBMED

Search Parameters:

- Publication dates within the last 7 years
- Written in the English language
- Being within a University Setting

Keywords:

- Education
- Online clinicals
- COVID-19
- Nursing students
- Online learning
- Nursing
- Undergraduate
- College

Current Evidence

24 articles were used for research relating to this topic

Universities and their faculty had to quickly find the best ways to present online learning to students in a sufficient way that could temporarily replace traditional classroom attendance.

- It was found that as a result of the pandemic and the transfer to online curriculum, as many as 22% of students had felt severe stress as they were not used to online learning, and their normal strategies for learning and comprehension were dramatically changed (Abdulghani et al., 2020) (Davies et al., 2015) (Gallagher-Lepak et al., 2014).

Another theme noted when conducting research is specifically related to how nursing school was impacted by COVID-19 and how it was to then be conducted online.

- It was proven that having a mixture of some online and traditional methods was the best approach (if possible), as supported by a study done by Allande-Cussó. It concluded that when forced online, “teaching staff should design strategies for the acquisition of clinical skills by students, despite the interruption of hands-on training” (2020).

The third theme recognizes practice changes and recommendations for online education relating to clinicals and obtaining needed skills.

- An article found when researching focuses on how online clinicals specifically affect nursing students and their feelings on how competent they feel completing skills after being taught them fully online. It states that “78% of nursing students surveyed reported feeling ill-prepared to complete nursing skills when taught them online.” (Huun, 2018, p. 26).

The common conclusion is that in-person experiences are better at preparing nursing students to perform skills. However, online experiences were not far behind and most students still were able to complete skills they were taught in a confident manner (McCutcheon et al., 2015) (Volkers, 2020).

Education Plan

Place: online through WebEx Seminars

Presented to: undergraduate nursing students at the University of Cincinnati

- Dr Irwin’s Mental Health Class on 3/14/21 at 1030
- Dr Catalano’s Patho/Pharm Class 3/22/21 at 1200

Purpose: to assist undergraduate nursing students with adjusting to online curriculum during the COVID-19 pandemic and make them more successful in their courses and clinical work

Objectives: importance of a designated study space during online learning, importance of sufficient internet connection, importance of interaction and collaboration (break out meetings and simulated virtual clinicals)

Implementation: presentation was conducted before both classes scheduled synchronous lecture via Webex

- 100 3rd year students from Dr Irwin’s class
- 140 2nd year students from Dr Catalano’s class

Allowed 5 minutes for pre-test completion

Utilized a PowerPoint to present researched material and new methods; including a Kahoot on stress management to keep students engaged

Allowed 5 minutes at the end of the presentation to complete the post-test and for questions

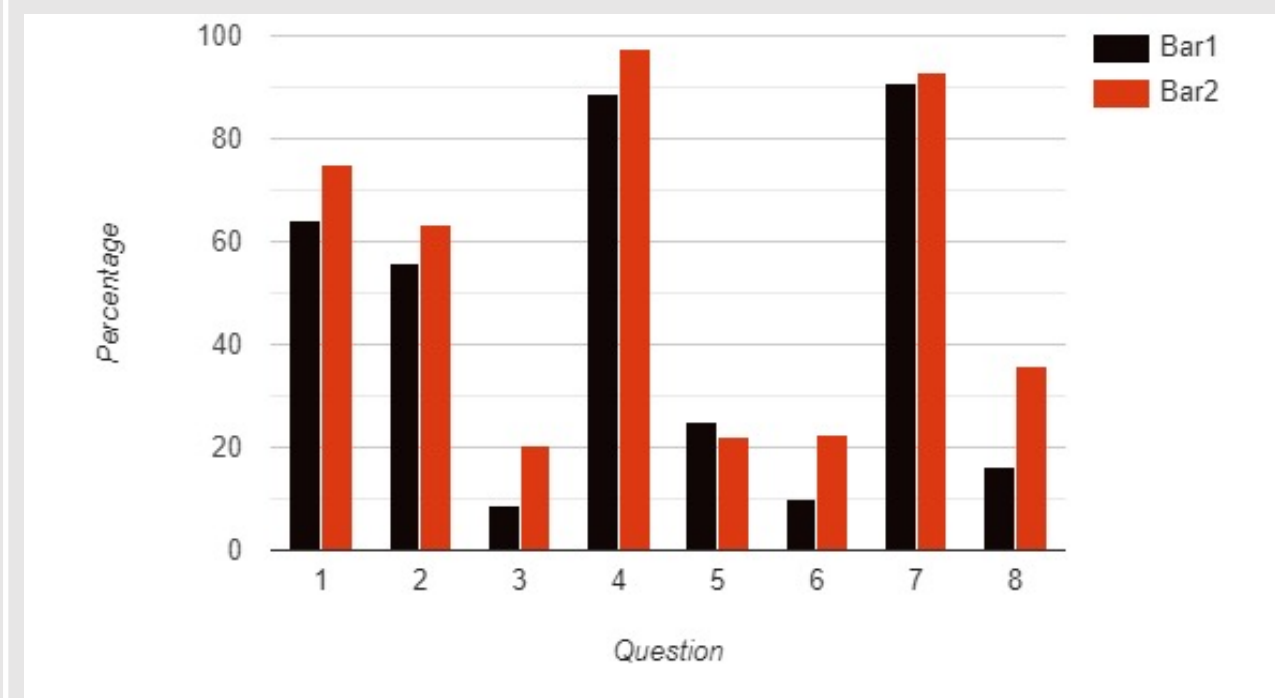
Results

During the education sessions, feedback and data was gathered from the target population using a ten question pre and post-test that utilized the 5-point sliding Likert scale in which the students would agree or disagree with the statement asked.

Received 116 responses on the post-test

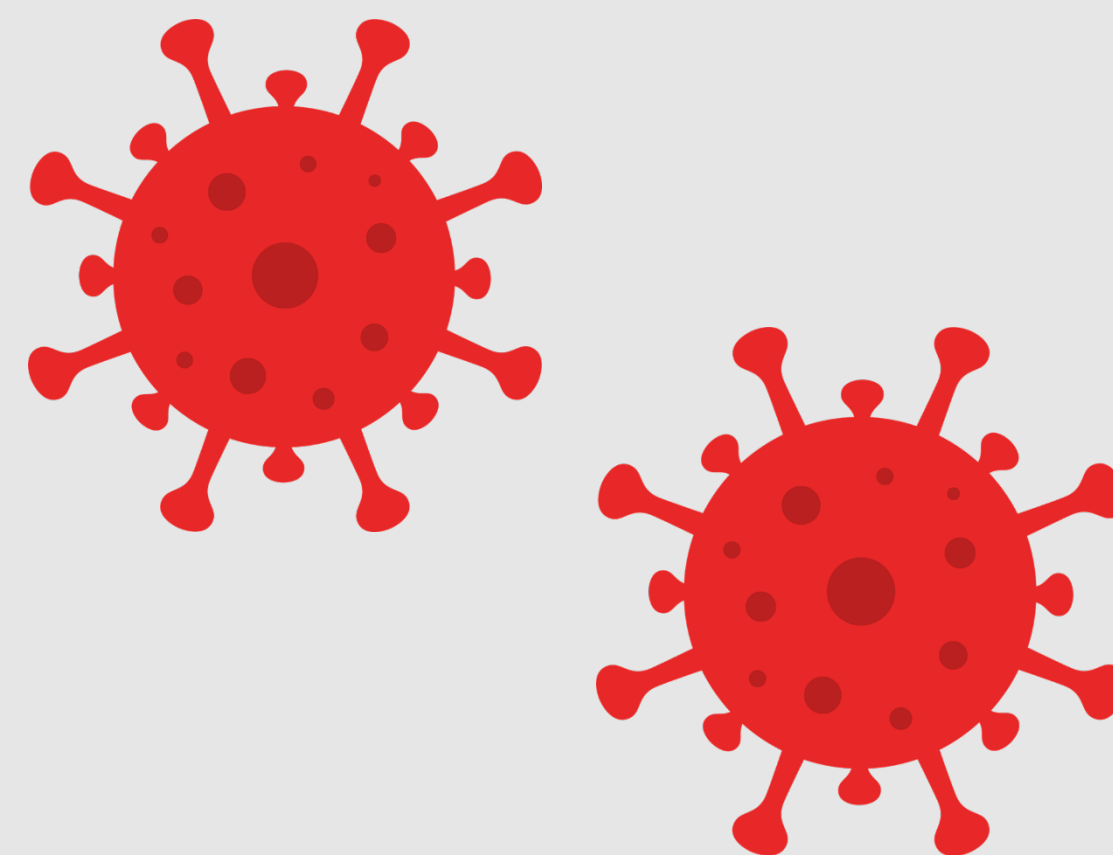
- 55.1% disagree with feeling less stressed in the online environment
- 53.1% disagree with feeling confident in performing skills that were taught virtually
- 91% learn best from in person clinicals and lectures

The data showed that 95% of students strongly agree that having a quality internet connection and having a designated study space free of distractions are some of the most important ways to succeed in the online setting.



Also, when comparing data from the pre-test and post test it was concluded that:

- The confidence using the Webex platform for the online curriculum increased from 64% to 75.8%.
- The ability to realize that virtual clinicals increase communication and critical thinking skills instead of performance of skills increased from 15.2% to 35.9%
 - Which are both essential in nursing practice



Conclusion

It was determined that there was an increased level of competency and confidence when the students completed tasks within their nursing school curriculum online after the education seminar. As a result, this will provide an increased retention of knowledge for students when taught online lectures by the nursing faculty, which will assist this population in succeeding within their coursework and clinical experiences.

The students are now able to mitigate distractions and other inefficient learning techniques, while increasing positive educational and study habits

Future Changes

More exploration could provide further suggestions on how to succeed in online nursing school while still feeling prepared for the workforce.

When in person learning begins again, using a combination of that and online resources is the most efficient way for BSN students to learn and be confident. Students who report a stress increase, due to the pandemic, should follow stress reduction techniques including mindful breathing, exercise, taking healthy breaks and practicing yoga.

More BSN students now understand, and are planning to use coffee shops, libraries, or campus internet if Wi-Fi becomes a technical or financial burden.

Overall, this feedback concluded that undergraduate nursing students feel more confident and prepared with the curriculum in person, but hopefully with these recommendations, increased support, and sufficient self-care, students can succeed while navigating nursing school online through the rest of the pandemic.

“There is no better time to re-envision what constitutes core content for entry-level (prelicensure) students and what strategies best help them learn than the present “ (Morin, 2020).

