
Clinical instructors for students

Clinical instructors play a crucial role in shaping the future of healthcare by training students on site to deliver patient-centered team-based care. Respiratory care clinical instructors play an integral part in preparing respiratory care students to be effective practitioners given that almost 50% of the respiratory care curriculum is conducted in the clinical environment under the supervision of clinical instructors. Professional competence, interpersonal relationships, personality characteristics and teaching ability are all qualities that clinical instructors should possess in order to provide students with quality clinical education experiences.

The purpose of this mixed method study was to (1) explore and compare respiratory care faculty and students' perceptions of the most important characteristics of an effective clinical instructor, (2) compare respiratory care academic and clinical faculty perceptions of characteristics of an effective clinical instructor, and (3) compare respiratory care students' perceptions of effective clinical instructor characteristics as they progress through the respiratory care program. A letter of solicitation which housed the link to an online questionnaire was sent to all respiratory care program directors in the US via email. Program directors' emails were secured from the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) website which provides an alphabetical listing of all accredited respiratory care education programs. The clinical instructor's effectiveness questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data. Three open-ended XII questions were also included to gather qualitative data. Data was secured for both respiratory care faculty and respiratory care students. 176 faculty and 122 students completed the questionnaire.

Respiratory care faculty scored the highest mean in the professional competency subscale $\mu=$ (4.81) and the lowest mean in the interpersonal relationship subscale $\mu=$ 4.5, while respiratory care students scored the highest mean in the interpersonal relationship subscale $\mu=$ (4.58) and the lowest in the professional competence subscale $\mu=$ (4.52). Independent sample t-test revealed non-significant differences between respiratory care academic and clinical faculty. A Mann Whitney U test revealed significant differences between respiratory care faculty and students in the professional competence ($p=.001$) and interpersonal relationship ($p= .01$) subscales. ANOVA test revealed a significant difference between students as they progress through the program in the interpersonal relationship subscale ($p=.02$). The qualitative findings of this study showed that respiratory care faculty prioritized evaluation skills and professional competence as the most important characteristics of an effective clinical instructor. However, students prioritized personality characteristics and interpersonal relationship as the most important characteristics of an effective clinical instructor.

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Training clinical instructors to be familiar with adult learning styles was the emergent theme from faculty responses. Hands-on was the emergent theme from students' responses to positive learning experiences and theory to practice gap was the emergent theme from students' responses to negative learning experiences. Clinical instructors should provide students with a caring learning environment that is based on mutual respect and open to dialogue. Positive interpersonal relationships with students are a crucial factor in determining a clinical instructor's effectiveness. Clinical instructors should attempt to meet the students at their XIII level of knowledge to reduce students' anxiety and fear of these complex learning environments.

Once a bond is made, the clinical instructors can then move the students along their journey of knowledge acquisition and application. Training programs that provide clinical instructors with a strong foundation in mentorship for learning should be required for all clinical instructors prior to receiving students. Keywords: Clinical Education, Clinical Instructor, Interpersonal Relationship, Respiratory Care Education and Respiratory Care Faculty

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