

Developing International Collaboration in Higher Education

Thorunn Scheving Eliasdottir, Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Iceland
Trevor Goldsmith, School of Nursing; Anesthesia DNP program, University of Minnesota
Joanne Donnelly, School of Nursing; Anesthesia DNP program, University of Minnesota

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I. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the United Nations (UN) goal to strengthen global partnerships and the International Federation of Nurse Anesthetists (IFNA) objective to foster collaboration between nurse anesthetists worldwide, the nurse anesthesia programs at the University of Iceland and the University of Minnesota have established a formal collaboration. Establishing global partnerships is essential for advanced-prepared registered nurse anesthetists in today's practice to enhance and ensure graduate educational competencies in addressing health challenges. International partnerships are particularly beneficial for a smaller program like nurse anesthesia at the University of Iceland as it can foster a more comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and globally aware approach to nurse anesthesia education and practice. This transnational collaboration aims to enhance the professional and personal growth of student registered nurse anesthetists, facilitate the exchange of ideas, and promote the sharing of best practices.

II. METHODS

The curriculum of the nurse anesthesia programs integrates global health partnerships and concepts through a four-pronged theoretical framework for establishing international collaborations to educate and develop advanced registered nurses in anesthesia care settings. The framework includes:

1. Mutual goal setting
2. Culture bridging
3. Capacity building
4. Engagement

As the programs continue to explore new ways to enrich their students' experience and improve the educational content, the formal methods of implementation include:

- Cultural competency training
- Student peer mentorship
- Joint quality improvement projects
- Virtual classrooms and simulations
- Wellness initiatives

In-country collaboration, peer mentorship, scheduled virtual sessions, and simulations have been used to develop and maintain the partnerships. A modified Cultural Awareness Scale

and Wellness survey measured students' responses at baseline and post-peer mentorship and wellness initiatives. A virtual transnational objective structured clinical examination is planned for this fall semester, simulating high-field telemedicine in the remote clinical practice setting.

III. RESULTS

Implementing the theoretical framework fostered formal collaboration and the development of key engagement between the nurse anesthesia programs at the University of Iceland and the University of Minnesota, aligned with the UN and IFNAs' objectives to revitalize global partnerships. The results of competencies and wellness initiatives indicated positive effects amidst the multiple stressors inherent in the educational programs. The students' responses contemplated appreciation of the cross-cultural peer mentorship engagement and sharing their experiences, highlighting both similarities and dissimilarities as student registered nurse anesthetists in different countries. The virtual wellness seminar was reported as a valuable and enjoyable classroom experience that provided resources for managing daily stressors.

IV. DISCUSSION

The collaboration between the University of Iceland and the University of Minnesota has enriched both institutions' curricula helping advanced prepared registered nurse anesthetists to implement solutions and quality improvement

projects to address demographic and global health challenges. The joint competencies and wellness initiatives have shown that the stress associated with anesthesia educational programs, which is well documented in the literature, transcends national boundaries. By utilizing technological advancement, the student registered nurse anesthetists had the opportunity for personal and straightforward peer mentoring. This interaction allowed them to exchange information and share their education experiences, which has been associated with positive academic performance and coping strategies among students in higher education. By extending this initial collaboration into the ongoing Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) initiative and transatlantic telemedicine simulations, we aim to enhance students' competency-based skills related to preoperative history-taking and clinical examinations of anesthesia patients. Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of virtual simulation in teaching healthcare students and anesthesiology residents how to conduct remote preoperative assessments with standardized patients. Such high-fidelity training provides a comprehensive approach to formative assessments of didactic knowledge and clinical and communication competencies within a safe learning environment. By promoting international collaborations in nurse anesthesia programs, institutions can explore new ways to cultivate a comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and globally informed approach to nurse anesthesia education and practice.

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