Case Study: Simulation and student electronic health record programs provide students with realistic clinical experiences

Background: The Dunigan Family Department of Nursing and Health Sciences at the University of Evansville (UE) in Indiana offers a bachelor of science in nursing (BSN), with a registered nurse to bachelor of science in nursing (RN-BSN) option. The program, which has 150 students, is accredited by the Indiana State Board of Nursing and the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. The Dunigan Nursing Simulation Laboratory contains high-fidelity simulation manikins that provide students with a robust clinical experience.

Issue or Requirement: The faculty wanted to provide students with a realistic clinical experience, including areas where patient access is challenging, such as pediatrics.

Approach: The faculty added the Simulation Learning System (SLS) and the educational electronic health record (EHR) SimChart® to their existing electronic textbooks and other tools, such as exam testing. Before the simulation, students read about the patient in SimChart and review medications and procedures not familiar to them. During the simulation, students rotate roles, then participate in a debriefing session. SimChart also aids students in learning how to document, including physical assessment findings and medication administration.

Results: Student scores on pediatric HESI exams increased. Students have reported that simulation helps them feel more confident in their abilities to know what to do when caring for patients in a clinical setting.

Benefits: Through simulation, students can practice skills in a safe learning environment and improve their critical-thinking skills, which prepares them for NCLEX®. Students can care for “patients” with conditions they might not see in the clinical setting on a daily basis, learn how to best react to situations in which patient safety is impaired, and practice broader skills such as communication. The realistic scenarios include cultural and psychosocial aspects, which align well with the school’s mission. Faculty do not have to spend significant time modifying scenarios, so they can concentrate on the learning experience, including debriefing. In addition, the use of SimChart has reduced the time it takes to grade case studies.