

# POSTCLINICAL CONFERENCE:

*Getting the biggest bang for your buck*

*Deborah Myers, MS, RNC*

# Definitions:

- ▣ Postclinical conferences by nature are small group discussion periods that immediately follows a clinical experience (Billings and Halstead, 2009).
- ▣ Clinical conferences give students the opportunity to share difficulties and feelings about patient care, develop critical thinking skills, describe nursing experiences and learn how to collaborate with others in a group (Gaberson & Oermann, 1999).

# Purpose:

- ▣ Postclinical conferences provide a forum in which students and faculty can discuss the clinical experiences, share information, analyze clinical situations, clarify relationships, identify problems, ventilate feelings, and develop support systems (Billings and Halstead, 2009).

# Advantages:

- ▣ Contributes to the attainment of the course and the clinical objectives (Wink as cited in Letizia, 1998).
- ▣ An opportunity to enhance clinical learning (Lister as cited in Leticia, 1998).
- ▣ Opportunity for students and faculty to interact and learn from each other (Rossignol, 2000).
- ▣ Enhances the capacity for clinical decision-making, increases self-confidence and improves group process skills (Reilly and Oermann as cited in Letizia, 1998).

# Disadvantages:

- ▣ May be disorganized, lacking in structure, and boring to students.
- ▣ Low energy levels of faculty and students
- ▣ If a surface level of learning approach is used, it promotes only memorization of information (University of Technology Sydney, 2004).

# Critical Elements:

- ▣ Environmental considerations
- ▣ Planning and organization
- ▣ Roles of participants
- ▣ Theoretical associations
- ▣ Group dynamics

# Environmental Considerations

- ❑ Request a room that has adequate space to accommodate the group, good lighting and privacy in that it allows for open discussion of patient care issues.
- ❑ Request access to a white board or similar visual aid. Multimedia access with Internet capability would be ideal.
- ❑ Arrange the group around a table or in a circle to facilitate communication.
- ❑ Create a nurturing and open environment that encourages student participation.
- ❑ Promote a learning environment that respects human values, rights, life-style choices, as well as spiritual and cultural beliefs.

# Planning and Organization

- ▣ Successful postclinical conferences are planned well in advance as opposed to spur-of-the-moment or adlibbing sessions.
- ▣ A variety of learning activities designed to enhance critical thinking and decision-making skills should be utilized.
- ▣ Assign any student reports, presentations, or group facilitation roles during clinical orientation.
- ▣ Discuss conference expectations and provide an outline of the weekly focus and learning activities.

# Role of Participants: Faculty

- ▣ Faculty role includes:
  - Being supportive and a sharer of information
  - Creating an environment that is conducive to discussion and group process
  - Organizing the conference as to topic, strategies for learning, and expected outcomes
  - Managing time and keeping the discussion on track
  - Providing feedback and clarifying concepts as well as identifying relationships, patterns, and trends
  - Debriefing challenging and emotional experiences as needed (these take precedence over all others)

# Role of Participants: Students

- ▣ Be prepared
- ▣ Be an active participant in the learning process
- ▣ Keep on task and adhere to group process
- ▣ Engage in team-building activities
- ▣ Practice communication skills

# Theoretical Associations

- ▣ Conferences should bridge the gap between theory and practice with an emphasis on current classroom topics.
- ▣ Assist students to apply theory to the clinical experience through a variety of learning experiences.
- ▣ Provide an avenue for learners to deal with complexity and higher level thinking by presenting challenging questions.

# Group Dynamics

- ▣ Create an environment of mutual respect and collaboration.
- ▣ Demand professionalism within the group as well as in the clinical setting.
- ▣ Faculty should role model behaviors consistent with scientific inquiry and those of a lifelong learner.

# Postclinical Conference Activities: Affective Learning

- ▣ Exploration of student feelings related to patient care; discuss any critical incidents and debrief
  - Attend to affective experiences with strong emotional reactions first (no learning will take place until the feelings have been ventilated or resolved)
- ▣ Review and critique clinical activities
- ▣ Discuss clinical concerns – help students “fill in the gaps”
- ▣ Explore the positive nursing behaviors that were observed
- ▣ Discuss observations of ethical decision-making
  - Engage students in an ethical debate by dividing up the group and assigning different sides of the issue at hand

# Postclinical Conference Activities: Cognitive Learning

- ▣ Relate specific patient profiles and/or patient care issues to the current classroom focus
- ▣ Concept mapping
  - Work with the group to create a concept map for one of the assigned clients or a specific disease process (have students take turns facilitating)
  - Resources for creating concept maps can be found at the following sites:
    - ▣ [Texas Collaborative for Teaching Excellence](#)
    - ▣ [Concept Mapping in Health Care Management](#)
- ▣ Prioritize care
  - Discuss one of the more complicated patient cases and have the group prioritize nursing care for the shift

# Postclinical Conference Activities: Cognitive Learning

- ▣ Ask each student to identify which patient care problem took priority for their specific client
- ▣ Assist the group to develop a case study based on one of the students patients
- ▣ Provide short, easy to read articles or clinical guidelines for the group to read and discuss
- ▣ Discuss EBP as it relates to specific patient care practices
- ▣ Assign each student a drug to discuss and have one student present each conference (maximum of 5 minutes)
- ▣ Utilize high-level questioning to help students deal with complexity and promote critical thinking

# Postclinical Conference Activities: Cognitive Learning

- ▣ Incorporate management theory
  - Present examples of delegated duties and have students discuss the level of staff to which they would be delegated
  - Discuss patient care assignments as they relate to admission, discharge, and available staff
  - Use SBAR reporting and have all students practice reporting off on their client.
    - ▣ [\(Shift Report and SBAR Strategies for Clinical Postconference\)](#)
    - ▣ [SBAR Reporting](#)
  - Bring in a LPN or CNA and have them speak about how to work with these professionals from their perspective

# Postclinical Conference: Psychomotor Learning

- ▣ Bring in specialists and have them demonstrate their skill and/or equipment
- ▣ Demonstrate the use of new equipment
- ▣ Ask students to identify if they observed a “different” way to perform a skill and how that compared to their learned method
- ▣ Review clinical guidelines and/or procedures and evaluate student understanding of the process

# How to Facilitate:

- ▣ Keep a portfolio of postclinical conference activities from which to choose
- ▣ Create a calendar of the weekly theory focus and specific activities to help bridge the gap
- ▣ Provide a variety of activities to help keep postclinical conference intellectually stimulating and to decrease boredom
- ▣ Provide student assignments for postclinical conference at the beginning of the semester
- ▣ Obtain feedback from the students as to what worked and what needs to be refined

# References:

Billings, D. M., & Halstead, J. A. (2009). *Teaching in nursing: A guide for faculty* (3<sup>rd</sup>. Ed.). St. Louis, MO: Elsevier Saunders.

Gaberson, K. B., & Oermann, M. H. (1999). *Clinical teaching strategies in nursing*. (135-185). New York: Springer.

Letizia, M. (1998). Strategies Used in Clinical Postconference. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 37(7), 315-317.

# References continued:

Rossignol, M. (2000). Verbal and cognitive activities between the among students and faculty in clinical conferences. *Journal of Nursing Education, 39(6), 245-250.*

University of Technology Sydney, Institute for Interactive Media and Learning. (2004, August 10). *Understanding Student Learning.*