Torkshavand G, Khatiban M, Soltanian AR. Simulation-based learning to enhance students' knowledge and skills in educating older patients. *Nurse Education in Practice.* 2020 Jan 1;42:102678.
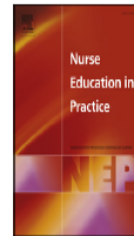
Original research

Simulation-based learning to enhance students' knowledge and skills in educating older patients

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Training nursing students in older patient education may be facilitated by the student elderly simulated-patient strategy. The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of simulation-based learning on students' skills in providing education to older patients. A quasi-experimental design with repeated measures was used. Nursing students enrolled in clinical courses in their semesters 7 and 8 of the program were randomly assigned to simulation-based learning (SBL) group (n = 35) or lecture-based learning (LBL) group (n = 35). In SBL, the student simulated-elderly patients equipped with devices for the age-related hearing loss, vision impairment, and neck, finger, and arm joint stiffness was trained to present the educational content to the students. Outcome (knowledge, attitudes, and skills) data were collected at pre-test, post-test, and one-month follow-up, using reliable measures. Data were analyzed with repeated measures analysis of variance. Students in the SBL and LBL groups were comparable at pre-test. All students demonstrated improvement in knowledge and skills in older patient education over time; however, students in the SBL group had larger and more durable improvements in these outcomes than those in the LBL group (all p's < .001). SBL is a promising instructional method, with long term benefits in improving students' skills.