Virtual Journal Clubs Improve Critical Appraisal Skill Acquisition
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Problem:
Common barriers to traditional nursing journal clubs (NJCs) include getting sufficient participation due to time constraints and availability of experienced facilitators.

Evidence:
An integrative review of ten research articles supports the benefit of NJCs in improving critical appraisal skill acquisition and fosters the dissemination of research findings.

Strategy:
Technological advances such as the Internet to access virtual environments, provides low-cost venues to engage nurses and mitigate barriers associated with face-to-face meetings. The purpose of this mixed methods study was to describe the experience of using a multi-user virtual environment (MUVE) to facilitate NJCs.

Practice Change:
Thirty-seven registered nurses/8 facilities were consented to participate in mentored NJC activities in one of four specialty groups (adult, critical care, neonatal, psychiatric). Each group participated in four sessions: orientation, 2 sessions of critiquing research literature using a toolkit, and debriefing/planning for NJC sustainability. Experts with competencies in critiquing literature facilitated all sessions.

Evaluation:
Nonparametric statistics were used to analyze project outcomes using pre-, post-, and 30-day follow-up surveys. Pre- and post-surveys (35-items) measured self-reported levels of confidence (10-point scale) addressing MUVE and critiquing skills. Content analysis from audio-video screen castings (>20 hrs) of NJC activities were analyzed for themes using NVivo8.

Results:
Findings from 33/37 participants include: Fisher’s Exact identified significantly (p <.05) improved competencies in determining design, interpreting statistics, linking conclusions/findings, and identifying limitations after the NJCs. No differences were identified in determining population, sample, implications, or interpreting qualitative findings. Quantitative analysis revealed that participants perceived improved competencies in critiquing research articles during the MUVE-facilitated NJCs and expressed a desire to continue virtual NJCs beyond the study. Qualitative analysis revealed that participants identified with their avatars’, and validated quantitative findings supporting progressive critical appraisal skill acquisition.

Recommendations:
MUVE-facilitated journal clubs should be expanded to other disciplines and methods to sustain participation explored.

Lessons Learned:
Lack of skills using innovative technology was easily overcome: however, minimum computer system requirements were critical to participation.
Bibliography:

