



The Certified Medical Surgical Nurse Peer Study Group: A Journey to Certification Through Knowledge, Engagement, and Collaboration

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ABSTRACT



Problem Statement: Caring for a high-acuity population with multiple comorbidities is challenging for medical/surgical nurses. Certification in medical/surgical nursing improves the skills of the certified nurse, and contributes to a unit's overall professional knowledge, which can support newer nurses.

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to enhance medical/surgical knowledge and clinical practice of non-certified medical/surgical nurses and to promote overall teamwork and collaboration. A secondary purpose of the project is for eligible nurses to become Certified Medical Surgical Registered Nurses (CMSRNs) through a combination of independent study and participation in a ten-week peer-led study group.

Approach: A ten-week hybrid virtual and in-person Medical Surgical Peer Study Group (MSPSG) began in June 2023 on a medical surgical unit within Mount Sinai West, a 500-bed acute care hospital in New York City. MSPSG meetings were held on Wednesday evenings in the unit's conference room and were co-facilitated by the unit's Patient Care Manager and the Magnet Program Director. Remote participants attended via Zoom. Group participants attended sessions on their own time. A baseline online exam of 50 questions (summative score: 0–100), taken from Lippincott study materials, was administered to the group to identify individual and group knowledge gaps. Baseline exam topics and subsequent weekly content was informed by the CMSRN exam blueprint. The facilitators identified content gaps, which were integrated into practice questions for the weekly study groups. Approximately 15–20 questions and rationales were reviewed every week. MSPSG participants answered questions using the Poll Everywhere website. Supplemental content materials were available on Google classroom to complement in-person meetings. In addition to the live learning, a ten-module independent continuing education content review was provided via CE Direct, and nurses could earn up to ten contact hours by completing the modules. Google Classroom was used to support supplemental content review related to content on the CMSRN exam blueprint.

Findings: Initially, 15 nurses registered for the MSPSG with an average of 3.9 years of medical/surgical nursing experience. Of the registered participants, 93% were eligible to take the CMSRN exam. Eleven group participants took the baseline exam and the mean score was 64% (Range: 52–84%). On average, ten registered participants attended the MSPSG weekly. In addition, drop-in

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participants joined, which included unit secretaries, patient care associates, and a unit student nurse intern. To date, five nurse participants registered for the CMSRN exam, three took the exam, and two passed. Eighty percent of the eligible nurses plan to sit for the CMSRN exam by September 2024.

Conclusions and Implications for Future Research: The intent of this study group was to create a platform to enhance nursing knowledge and patient care. We found that this learning format created a lively environment with high levels of participant engagement. Participants also shared that they appreciated that all were welcome to participate in the group and at any time, regardless of job title or CMSRN exam eligibility status. The course format was designed to be easily replicated, with the goal of having newly certified CMSRNs lead future study groups for other medical/surgical units throughout our hospital and health system. By increasing the number of CMSRNs, the use of study groups could ultimately affect National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators, patient satisfaction, recruitment, retention, and employee engagement.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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