Text Messaging to Support Off-campus Clinical Facilitators of Undergraduate Student Nurses

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Background

Mobile phone use and research:
• Students feel supported and motivated
• SMS can assist knowledge transfer
• Sense of connection
• Clinical facilitators feel better able to meet needs of the role

Aim of study

Explore the use of SMS for coordinating academics to communicate with clinical facilitators during off-campus clinical work experience with undergraduate student nurses

Setting: Queensland University of Technology
School of Nursing

- 2,900 undergraduate students
- 800 hours of clinical placement during Bachelor of Nursing
- Clinical facilitators and preceptors

Method and questions

Descriptive survey:

1. Is using SMS a convenient method of communication between the coordinating academics and clinical facilitators?
2. Does using SMS improve communication between coordinating academics and clinical facilitators?
3. Do clinical facilitators report feeling more supported due to the use of SMS?
4. Do clinical facilitators report feeling part of the teaching team due to the use of SMS?
**Participants**

46 clinical facilitators:
- 24 seconded staff
- 22 university employed staff
- Access to mobile phone with SMS capability

**Instrument**

- 15 item questionnaire
- 13 items used 5 point categorical scale
- 2 items open ended questions
- Demographic data collected
Procedure / implementation

- Ethics – QUT HREC
- Participant emailed the information
- SMS sent Mon, Wed & Fri for the duration of two week placement
- Focused on relevant information for time of the placement
Data analysis

- Quantitative data
  - Descriptive
  - Chi-square test
  - Bivariate analysis – Spearman’s rho.

- Qualitative data
  - Thematic analysis

Demographic Data

- 91% female
- 77% >40 years age
- 55% post graduate qualifications
- All had between 1-10 years experience
- 37% had 3-5 years experience
- All respondents were University employed rather than seconded to the role
Results

- 77% strongly agreed convenient to receive SMS
- 82% of participants that the coordinating academic was more approachable as a result of regular SMS communication
- 82% of participants felt included in the teaching team

Results

The approachability of the coordinating academic:
- clinical facilitator perception that the coordinating academic understood issues on clinical placement \( r = 0.785, p < 0.001 \)
- Clinical facilitator perception of being part of the teaching team \( r = 0.768, p < 0.001 \)
Findings
Qualitative - Connection

“By texting us, I felt I wasn’t alone.”

(Participant 3)

“...provided physical connection - not just a name on paper. Sometimes SMS would lead to follow up phone call, providing further connection.”

(Participant 4)

Findings
Qualitative - Approachability

“I felt that the coordinator [coordinating academic] was interested in how I was going out on prac [clinical placement] and approachable if I had any concerns”.

(Participant 8)
Findings
Qualitative - Collaboration

“SMS are useful; we are all 'on the same page' and working together as a team to meet practicum [clinical placement] objectives.”
(Participant 22)

Discussion

- Demographics – similar to Australian nursing population
- Connection, collaboration, approachable
- Time efficient
- Cost effective
Limitations

- Limited by design and sample size
- Consider with caution
- Participants - University employees

Beware of the predictive texts
Conclusion

• Wide scope for use of SMS to communicate routine announcements and maintain a connection between academics and clinical facilitators
• Additional communication strategy
• Further research required

References


