

Empower: fostering the competency of emergency department nurses.

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Emergency nurses play a vital role in the assessment and management of critically ill patients. Nurses are required to update their knowledge and skills to embrace the dynamic change in emergency nursing practice. The literature gives strong emphases on practicing evidence-based practice to ensure quality of care and patient safety. To maintain the update in practice, emergency department nurses often faces several challenges such as time constrain, lack of educational resources especially related to hand-on skills. The presentation will focus on the initiative of Khoul Hospital emergency department “Empower” to achieve the competency of nurses working within the department of the national trauma centre in the Sultanate of Oman.

The need for such initiative emerged from the concerns raised by the senior nurses during the resuscitation of patients. The programs offered by the training and development department were not sufficiently addressing the large number of staffing and limited number of programs related to emergency nursing care. To address the issues, an in-house initiative to enhance the competency level of the nurses was developed and implemented at the emergency department of Khoula Hospital. The initiative based on the results reported by the training need analysis of the staff. Issues such as communication barrier between healthcare team, hesitancy to ask for help when needed, lack of knowledge and skills related to patients assessment were identified from the need analysis report. The issues were discussed with the quality improvement department and a plan was set to initiate the “Empower” program.

The program focuses on raising the competency level of the nurses and doctors using a competency based assessment as well as peer education approaches. In addition, it was a mandatory requirement to complete for an annual appraisal report of the nurse. The steering team was recruited, trained and allocated the responsibility to implement the initiative. The steering committee met and developed a training program, which included a primary and secondary patient assessment, basic and advanced airway management and basic and advanced life support. For each module, a competency assessment tool was developed along with a program evaluation form. The initiative was active since 2009 and the initiative was adopted by other departments within the hospital.

An awareness camping was done initially to create a positive environment and reduce the stress of being” under examination” status. Facilitators were made available throughout the three shifts, seven days a week. The process was to introduce the module on a monthly practice meeting, followed by a self-study period and an assessment period. Following the first two modules, nurses reported being more current with knowledge and skills, more confidant caring for critically ill patients and empowered to maintain professional development. Several nurses showed interest in helping and sharing their skills with those needed more demonstration and feedback. Nurses described the experience as” nurses empowering nurses, and that’s what we do, we back up each other!”