Educating School Nurses: Returning to School During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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BACKGROUND

School nurses have taken on new roles during the COVID-19 pandemic and school re-opening process requiring nurses to remain current on frequently changing return to school guidelines. A public school district in East Tennessee lacked a formal continuing education process for its school nurses. The purpose of this Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) project was to provide education to East Tennessee school nurses on current return-to-school guidelines via an interactive e-learning platform.

GUIDING FRAMEWORK

This project utilized Larrabee's Model for Evidence-Based Practice Change.

PICO QUESTION

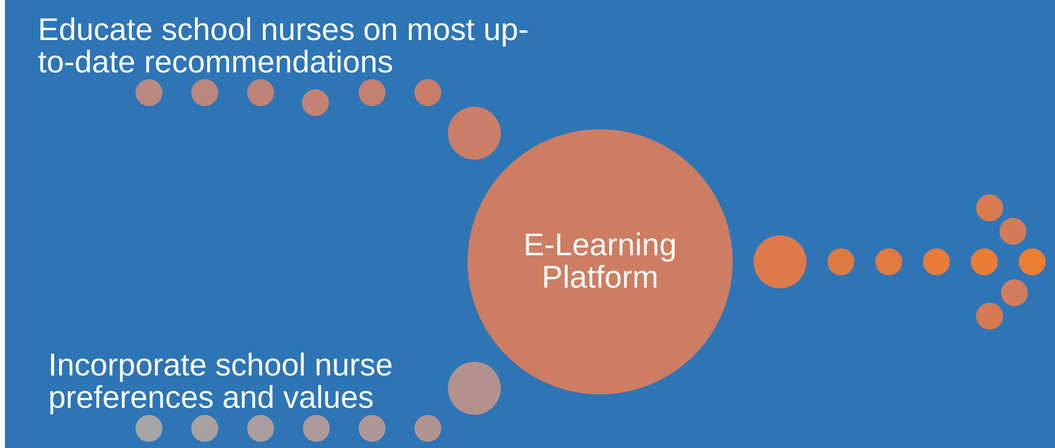
In school nurses (P), how does application of the standardization of return to school COVID-19 guidelines (I) compared to no guidelines (C) affect student identification and mitigation of suspected COVID-19 infections (O)?

SEARCH STRATEGY

- A comprehensive and grey literature search was conducted with keywords and structures: school nurse, coronavirus, return to school
- In collaboration with the school nurse supervisor, a survey was created and sent to each school nurse within the district. Survey responses were used to assess organizational needs.

Reference available upon request.

TEACHING PLAN

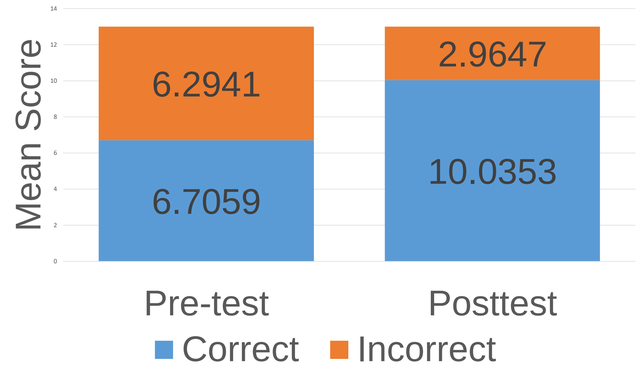


METHOD

- School nurses were instructed to complete an interactive e-learning module utilizing the Electronic Education Documentation System (EEDs) platform
- Nurses were instructed to take a pretest prior to completing the educational module, followed by a posttest after module completion.
- The e-learning content and the pre/posttest assessments were reviewed by three field experts prior to implementation.
- Demographical, pretest, and posttest data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired sample *t*-test.

RESULTS

There was a significant difference in the 13 item posttest scores in comparison to pretest results (p=<0.001).



Learners reported an improved understanding in COVID-19 return to school guidelines following module completion (mean pre =4.06, mean post = 4.55; p= <0.001).

CONCLUSION

Results from this EBP project supports e-learning as an effective method for school nurse continuing education. This can be especially beneficial when COVID-19 recommendations are rapidly evolving, as well as encouraging distant learning.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Replication of this project could involve education on other evidence-based organizational needs, however, we recommend a follow-up posttest be distributed to assess knowledge retention about a month after module completion. Frequent communication with the school nurses may be needed to address changing public health recommendations. The next area of education may include COVID-19 vaccination of children and staff.