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Activity 2

Digital toolkit for innovative curriculum and methodological development

Module - Problem solving

Method – Decision simulation

Case study

Module 4 – Problem Solving

Case study - Navigating Crisis: Decision Simulation in Healthcare Training

Related Method - Decision Simulation

Context and Background

This case study comes from a regional healthcare training institute that provides continuous professional development for nurses and healthcare workers. The target group comprises adult learners—practicing professionals - engaged in upskilling courses related to emergency response and patient care. The institute sought to improve critical decision-making skills under pressure.

Problem / Challenge Presented

Healthcare workers often have to make urgent, high-stakes decisions that can greatly affect patient outcomes. Traditional lecture-based training doesn't always prepare them for these real-time, complex situations, especially during crises like sudden patient deterioration or unexpected complications.

Actions Taken / Method Applied

The institute introduced Decision Simulation exercises, where learners took part in realistic, time-sensitive scenarios, such as managing a sudden cardiac arrest. Working in small groups, participants used detailed case cards to make collaborative decisions and then immediately saw the outcomes of their choices through guided debriefings and role-plays. Trainers encouraged reflection on the decision-making process and discussion of alternative strategies.

Outcomes and Results

As a result of the training, participants became more confident in making quick decisions under pressure. Their critical thinking and teamwork skills improved noticeably, and they reported feeling more engaged and better able to understand the consequences of their choices.



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Trainers also observed that learners hesitated less and communicated more effectively during real clinical situations after completing the exercises.

Lessons Learned

Simulation-based decision exercises are a powerful way to connect theory with real-world practice, especially in high-pressure professions. Working together on decisions encourages peer learning and shared responsibility, while immediate feedback and reflective discussions help learners understand the consequences of their choices more deeply. Designing scenarios that reflect actual workplace challenges also makes the experience more relevant and motivating for participants.

Key Success Factors

The success of the programme relied on several key factors. Scenarios were realistic and tailored to the specific context, developed with input from practicing clinicians. Skilled facilitators guided reflection while ensuring a safe and supportive learning environment. Small group sizes encouraged active participation and lively discussion, and the simulations were effectively integrated into a broader blended learning approach, combining different teaching methods for a richer learning experience.

Challenges Encountered and How They Were Addressed

Several challenges arose during the exercises. Some learners were initially hesitant about the active, participatory approach, but this was addressed through clear explanations of the benefits and supportive guidance from facilitators. Organising small groups and managing the timing of sessions also proved tricky, so careful scheduling and training additional facilitators helped keep things running smoothly. Finally, keeping the scenarios aligned with current clinical guidelines required continuous collaboration with subject experts.

Applicability / Recommendations for Educators

Decision Simulation exercises can be adapted to many adult learning contexts where real-time, complex decision-making matters, such as social work, education management, or agriculture. Educators should work with practitioners to create authentic, relevant scenarios. Debriefings are essential, providing guided reflection to help learners internalize lessons. It's best to start with simpler scenarios for beginners and gradually increase the complexity.



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Throughout, creating a safe and supportive environment encourages learners to take risks and engage in open discussion.

