NGN Talks: A Look at the Strategic Practice Analysis & Special Research Section Video Transcript

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An important component of NCSBN's role in supporting the work of nurse regulatory bodies and ensuring public protection is the development of a valid and reliable measure of entry-level nurse competence. A key element of this activity is ensuring the NCLEX is comprehensive and reflects current nursing practice.

To aid in the identification of a comprehensive list of current aspects of nursing practice, NCSBN conducted a strategic practice analysis of entry-level registered nurses or RNs. The study focused on collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from a diverse set of RN job experts about the requirements of the job, leveraging multiple data collection methods, and focusing on essential aspects of the RN practice.

The purpose of this study was to support the development and validation of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of entry-level RNs. To help ensure a comprehensive analysis of the full scope of entry-level RN practice, the study focused on job-related information including measurement research on duties, tasks, knowledge, skills, abilities, other personal characteristics, tools and equipment, healthcare trends, key judgments, and consequences of error.

Definitions and descriptions were used throughout each component of the study to help ensure reliability of the study participants' responses. These definitions included, clinical judgment, which is defined by the skill of recognizing cues about a clinical situation, generating and weighing hypotheses, taking action, and evaluating outcomes for the purpose of arriving at a satisfactory clinical outcome.

Clinical judgment is the observed outcome of two unobserved underlying mental processes, critical thinking, and decision making. Problem- solving includes developing and evaluating interventions to resolve complex problems within the context of nursing. And critical thinking involves the skill of using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative healthcare solutions, conclusions or approaches to clinical or practice problems.

The findings from the strategic practice analysis confirmed the importance of sound clinical judgment skills to a significant number of tasks performed by entry-level nurses. The research found that clinical

judgment, problem-solving, and critical thinking were reported among the top five skills required of entry-level RNs.

Clinical judgment was linked directly to more than 46% of tasks performed by entry-level nurses. While problem-solving and critical thinking were linked to more than 30% of tasks performed by entry-level nurses. These initial findings provided evidence of the importance of clinical judgment, problem-solving, and critical thinking to competent practice of entry-level nurses, and the necessity to measure these skills within the NCLEX.

Based on these findings, the focus of the Next Generation NCLEX Research is developing innovative item types that can validly and reliably measure clinical judgment and decision making in nursing practice. The strategic practice analysis executive summary is available for download. The next topic I'm going to highlight is Item Type Data Collection or ITDC and the preliminary analysis from the Special Research Section.

Beginning in July 2017, NCSBN presented a Special Research Section with the NCLEX-RN Administration. The Special Research Section is offered to select candidates taking the NCLEX-RN. Participation is voluntary and does not count towards the candidate's score. The Special Research Section is intended to collect data on new item types or ITDC that could expand or enhance the measurement of entry-level nursing competence, including clinical judgment.

The initial ITDC results from the July 2017 exam provided the following findings. Seventy-nine point one percent of NCLEX candidates who received the Special Research Section participated. Candidates completed an average of 17 out of 20 items and candidates spent an average of 19.6 minutes to complete the entire Special Research Section.

The following analysis focused on several key variables including ethnicity, gender, educational program type, and NCLEX exam repeater status. The demographics remained consistent among participating and nonparticipating candidates. The Special Research Section will continue for the next several quarters and will provide valuable data to aid in developing innovative item types, and scoring rules, and gathering evidence of item characteristics that support and drive future research for the NGN project.

Additional information about the Special Research Section can be found on the NGN resource page on ncsbn.org.