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Accuracy of interpreting vital signs in simulation: An empirical study of conformity between medical and nursing students

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The hierarchical relationship between nursing and medicine has long been known; yet, its direct influence on procedural tasks has yet to be considered. Drawing on the theory of conformity from social psychology, we suggest that nursing students are likely to report incorrect information in response to subtle social pressures imposed by medical students. Second year medical and 3rd year nursing students took vital signs readings from a patient simulator. In a simulation exercise, three actors, posing as medical students, and one nursing student participant all took a total of three rounds of vital signs on a high fidelity patient simulator. In the first two rounds the three actors individually stated the same *correct* vital signs values, and on the third round the three actors individually stated the same *incorrect* vital sign values. This same procedure was repeated with actors posing as nursing students, and one medical student. A two-way analysis of variance revealed that nursing student participants (M = 2.84; SD = 1.24) reported a higher number of incorrect vital signs than did medical student participants (M = 2.13; SD = 1.07), $F(1,100) = 5.51$, $p = 0.021$ (Cohen's $d = 0.61$). The study indicated that social pressure may prevent nursing students from questioning incorrect information within interprofessional environments, potentially affecting quality of care.

Biography

Dr. Kaba, completed her PhD in Medical Education at the University of Calgary, Alberta where she worked with the Health Human Factors Team at the W21C Innovation and Research Centre on her doctoral study examing conformity amongst interprofessional teams. She received national recognition for her dissertation work and was awarded the prestigious CIHR Vanier Canadian Scholarship. Most recently, Alyshah was awarded the 2015 Emerging Young Investigators Award in Simulation Research from Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Currently she is Lead Research Scientist for eSIM Provincial Simulation Program and Quality and Patient Safety Education within Alberta Health Services.

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