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White Paper

Assessing Nursing Students' Practice Readiness:

Development and Validation of Elsevier's HESI Clinical Practice Readiness Assessment (CPRA)

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Executive Summary

The transition from nursing education to practice is a critical period for new graduate nurses. Despite the pass rates of the National Council Licensure Examination-Registered Nurse (NCLEX-RN®) around 88%, there are persistent concerns about new graduates' readiness to perform effectively in clinical settings. Elsevier's HESI Clinical Practice Readiness Assessment (CPRA) was developed to address these concerns by providing a standardized tool for assessing the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) necessary for new graduates. This white paper discusses the validation and implementation of the CPRA, including the standard-setting process, to ensure it reliably measures practice readiness.

Introduction

Elsevier's HESI Clinical Practice Readiness Assessment (CPRA) evaluates nursing students at the end of their education training program, assessing knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) essential for new graduates transitioning into clinical practice. Despite an NCLEX-RN® pass rate averaging 88%, concerns about the workplace preparation of new graduates persist (Kavanagh & Sharpneck, 2021). Research indicates that up to 53% of new graduate nurses make errors in their first year, negatively impacting patient outcomes (Huston, et al., 2018). The CPRA was developed to provide a standardized method of assessing clinical competency skills, categorizing participants into four mastery levels: Emerging, Developing, Proficient, and Advanced.

Methodology for Standard Setting

Design and Execution

The standard-setting study for the CPRA adhered to the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA & NCME, 2014). It involved selecting and training a panel of experts, implementing standard-setting methods, providing panel feedback, and documenting findings. Data was obtained from a pilot assessment with nursing students in their final semester from five different nursing programs.

Selection of Standard-Setting Method

Standard setting can follow norm-referenced or criterion-referenced procedures. The CPRA study adopted the criterion-referenced approach, specifically the Bookmark method (Lewis, Mitzel, Green & Patz, 1999), which is well-suited for educational settings and ensures consistent competency levels. An expert panel, consisting of 10 nurse educators from various academic institutions and healthcare organizations, was convened in Philadelphia, PA. All panel members supervise and train either students or entry-level nurses.

Implementation

The CPRA standard-setting workshop occurred over two days. Panelists took the CPRA exam to familiarize themselves with the content. They then developed performance level profiles for the four mastery levels — Emerging, Developing, Proficient, and Advanced. These levels were defined based on constructs such as Assessment, Communication, Education, Safety, and Clinical Judgment. Panelists then reviewed the pilot testing results and applied the Bookmark method to set cut scores for each performance level, ensuring the assessment's validity. The process involved multiple rounds of setting the standard and analyzing the scores to refine the cut points and weighting of constructs. All expert panelists agreed the final performance level weights accurately reflect expectations of KSAs for a new graduate nurse.

Following the workshop, panelists completed a survey about the CPRA and the standard-setting process.
Key findings include:

- 100% agreement that the CPRA measures important skills for new graduates

- Mixed responses on the importance of studying for the CPRA, reflecting the emphasis on general nursing skills and clinical judgment

- Consensus that the CPRA is a valid assessment of practice readiness

Conclusion

The CPRA provides a reliable and standardized tool for assessing the practice readiness of new graduate nurses. Its development and validation involved rigorous standard-setting processes, ensuring it accurately measures essential KSAs. Educators can use the CPRA to evaluate students at the end of their nursing programs, gaining insights into their performance in critical areas such as Assessment, Communication, Education, Safety, and Clinical Judgment.

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