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Service and knowledge in nurse anesthesia students after service learning program implementation

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American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) core values promoting community service includes: professionalism, compassion, diversity, and interprofessional collaboration. Nurse anesthesia students (SRNAs) are rarely exposed to underserved groups outside of the operating room. Service learning projects provide experiences that help students overcome negative stereotypes, heighten sensitivity and increase empathy. The project was to determine if implementation of service learning project (SLP) would increase knowledge and participation in community, professional, or health volunteerism in SRNAs. A quasi-experimental control trial was completed using SRNAs. Group 1 consisted of freshman and junior classes who were exposed to the SLP, and Group 2 (Control) consisted of 22 senior students, who did not participate in the SLP. Prior to implementation, both groups took a knowledge/opinion pretest and Group 2 took an attitudes survey. Group 1 participated in SLP, including the requirement to complete 20 hours of service and completed the attitudes survey prior to graduation. Both groups completed the knowledge/opinion posttest and participation survey six months after graduation. Due to small group sizes, statistical analyses for both the knowledge/opinion survey and participation survey were unable to meet assumptions of chi-square statistic. However, post-graduation participation survey demonstrated increased percentages in Group 1 for service during school, opportunities since graduation, service in first six months, and plans for service. Mann-Whitney U analysis found no differences in service attitudes scale results between groups. The treatment group had increased percentage of service participation. The SLP has become a discriminator and characteristic of the nurse anesthesia educational program.

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