Stronger Together: Learner Reactions on a Team-based, Interprofessional First Death Simulation Experience

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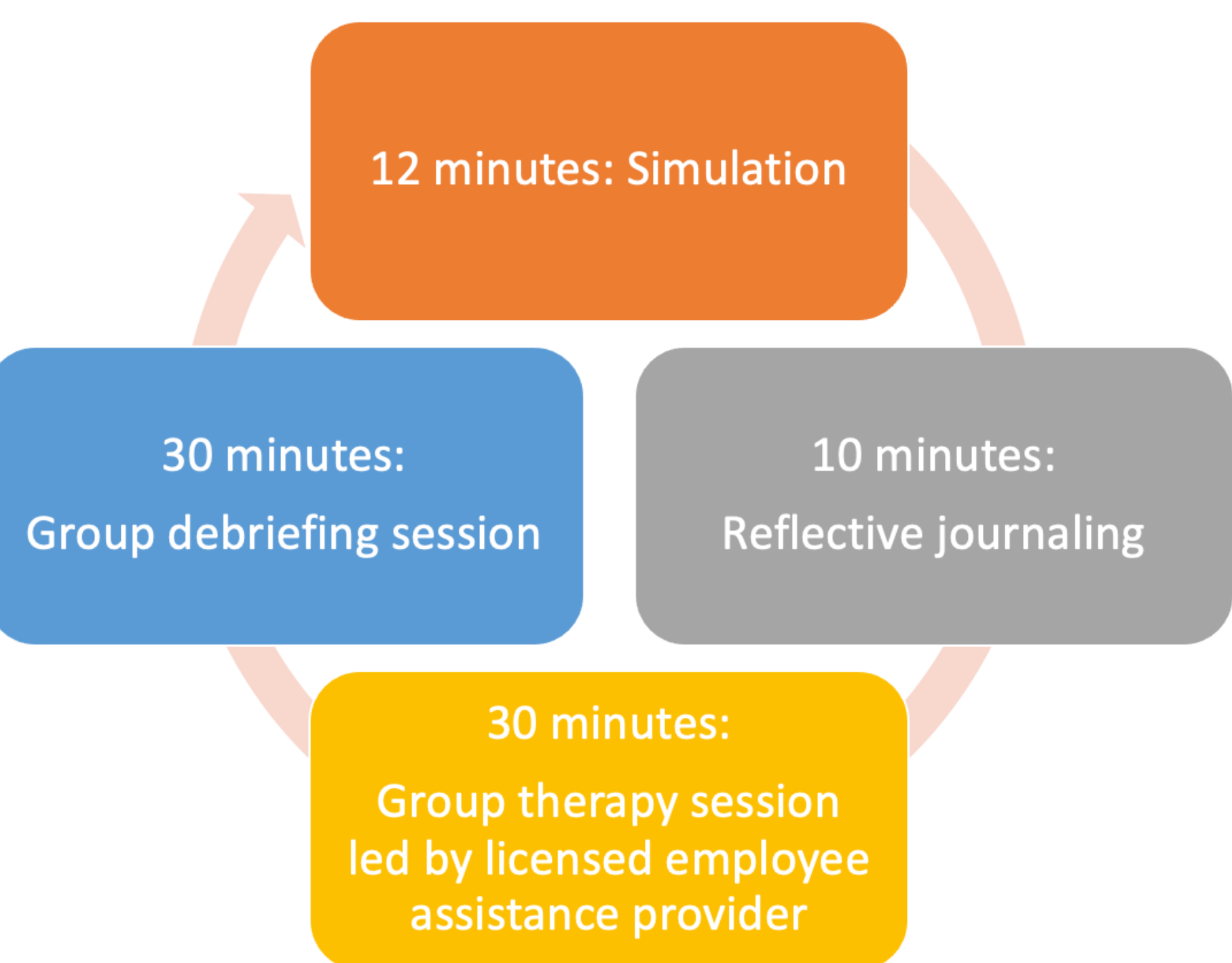
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Background

Patient death is a common experience that may be traumatic for health care providers.[1,2,3] Hospital-based clinicians are typically in a culture that minimizes the toll of traumatic clinical experiences.[4] Numerous studies estimate clinician burnout prevalence as high as 78%, with this pattern in acute exacerbation during the COVID pandemic.[5,6] Despite evidence supporting that interprofessional coping can improve clinician mental health,[7,8] research examining learner-centric, simulation-based interventions is sparse.

Interprofessional First Death Simulation

- 12 minutes: Simulation
- 30 minutes: Group debriefing session
- 10 minutes: Reflective journaling
- 30 minutes: Group therapy session led by licensed employee assistance provider

☐ Human-based and technology-based simulation created an enriched environment for interprofessional health care learners to experience, engage, and participate in a team-based, simulated patient death.
☐ Deliberate integration of multiple modalities of event processing.

Research Question

How do learners react to being part of an interprofessional team after having participated in a team-based, interprofessional simulation about the death of a patient?

Methods

☐ **Design**: Qualitative descriptive
☐ **Participants**: Convenience sampling
- 15 teams representing 61 interprofessional learners
- Nursing (n = 16), Pharmacy (n = 14), and Medicine (n = 31)
☐ **Analysis of debriefings**: Inductive content analysis[9]
☐ **Inter-rater reliability**: Random sample of 16% of total data (one debriefing)
- Percentage agreement 90.91%; Cohen's kappa indicated almost perfect agreement ($k = 0.8811$, $p < 0.001$)[10,11]

Results

Emotional awareness

Team-based care
Positive emotions related to team-based care
Sharing emotions
Learners share common emotional reactions
Validation
Empathy & validation towards peers

"I was very relieved, honestly. From the second we walked in, just knowing that there was a multitude of approaches and experiences to enter a very difficult situation. That is a huge relief."

Communication strategies

Role clarity
Successful application of role clarifying communication strategies
Future interprofessional communication
Strategies to adopt in future practice

"We personally would call out each other by name when we were switching compressions or assigning things that we needed to do, like check the pulse. We were calling each other by name so we knew what to do."

Stronger together

Identification as stronger when functioning as part of an interprofessional team instead of as an individual caring for a dying patient

"It gave me confidence knowing that pharmacy was there... I was just thinking, 'What are they doing with the epi?' It gave me confidence that other areas that I'm not as strong in are covered, to have the best care for the patient."

Role exploration

I want to learn...
Learners inspired to understand other professions
I want to share...
Learners eager to share about their own profession

"I don't know anything about nursing school. I don't know what you guys know how to do... We didn't know what to expect from anyone else except for the people who are on the same degree as us... I want to learn about what nurses do from you guys."

Team-based support

Realization
Organic realization it is possible to be supportive of, and access support from team members
Accessing feelings
Hearing team members express feelings enabled self access
Shared responsibility
Shared responsibility diluted negative feelings
Looking ahead
Ways to incorporate into future practice

"It takes away some of that feeling like you're dangling alone over the edge, because we all are in this together and decided [to stop CPR and call the code] together."

Conclusions

☐ Learner introspection spanned multiple interprofessional competencies[12] and was forward facing to clinical practice.
☐ Results support experiential simulation as a modality to foster constructive, learner-centric interprofessional wellness.
☐ Expands the current landscape of interprofessional education by providing an evidence-based, actionable model to foster interprofessional exploration.

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Future Research

☐ Explore how First Death participation may impact learners' behaviors while engaged in clinical practice.
☐ Establish relationships with concrete measures of wellness and burnout.

Citations