

Evaluating Summer Learning Loss in Associate Degree Nursing Students

Abstract

In healthcare education, programs like nursing programs often have a curriculum that only permits the students to take classes in specific sequences and therefore, could leave them with no classes scheduled during the summer months in the subject matter. This schedule results in a type of summer learning gap where students take a three-month break from studying material which is essential to retain to pass licensure exams. The purpose of this comparative, quantitative, exploratory study was to examine knowledge retention following the summer break of generic Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) students starting their last semester of nursing school at a community college with a nine-month, four-semester curriculum. Scores on the ATI Medical/Surgical proctored exam were compared for two groups, from before and after the summer break: those that had worked in a healthcare setting over the summer, and those that had not worked in a healthcare setting over the summer. A Mann-Whitney U test revealed a significant difference with a medium effect size in the ATI Medical/Surgical proctored exams given after summer in those students who worked in health over the summer, and from those who did not work in healthcare. This study contributed to knowledge of summer learning loss in higher education by discussing implications for the future and recommendations.

Keywords: summer learning loss, nursing knowledge retention