

Quality Improvement in Nursing

Samjhana Rai

Lakeview College of Nursing

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Professor Whisman

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QSEN Competencies and Quality Improvement

Quality improvement is a systematic process of upgrading the healthcare delivery system by continually observing, examining, and refining care cycle activities. In nursing practice, quality improvement can be defined as the intentional use of data-driven approaches to identify areas for improvement and implement evidence-based interventions to assess their impact and ensure optimal patient care. The Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) initiative incorporates quality improvement directly into its set of six core competencies, making quality improvement a central notion in nursing performance and education. The QSEN Institute defines quality improvement competency as the ability of nurses to monitor the results of care processes using data and to design and test changes using improvement methods to improve the quality and safety of healthcare systems continually. QSEN utilizes quality improvement as a means of enhancing patient outcomes through systematic strategies that involve nurses at various levels of practice, particularly by focusing on the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle as a primary strategy for change testing and implementation in healthcare settings.

Article Summary

The aim of the research study by AlRatrouf et al. (2024) was to investigate the impact of a QSEN competency program on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of Palestinian junior nurses from the Palestinian Ministry of Health. This was a quasi-experimental study with a sample of 164 junior nurses, utilizing a pre-test/post-test design to evaluate the effectiveness of an organized QSEN education intervention. The intervention group consisted of a detailed 4-hour QSEN competencies program that incorporated various teaching methods, in contrast to the control group, which received no intervention. The participants exhibited statistically significant growth in knowledge (57%), skills (57%), and attitudes (64%) after the educational intervention,

all of which were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The study suggests that structured QSEN education is capable of yielding quantifiable gains in nursing practice proficiencies, which is particularly interesting to healthcare organizations that have implemented quality improvement initiatives.

Overview

The Palestinian study revealed significant findings regarding the effectiveness of QSEN competency education. The intervention group achieved significant results, with knowledge level scores of 49.19 and 77.02, quality and safety skills scores of 44.61 and 70.16, and attitudes scores of 46.16 and 75.47, compared to the control group. Such findings are directly applicable to patients, as they demonstrate how enhanced nurse competencies can achieve the anticipated patient outcomes (AlRatrouf et al., 2025). When nurses develop skills and a positive attitude toward quality and safety, they increase their ability to recognize potential issues and support evidence-based interventions to improve the delivery of patient care (AlRatrouf et al., 2025). The research has a direct connection to the Quality Improvement competency at QSEN, as it reveals the estimation of systematic academic interventions as QI measures in themselves. It involves co-designing the collection of data, evidence-based interventions, and outcomes measurement, which represents the PDSA cycle at the center of the QI framework at QSEN.

Quality Improvement

According to the research results, the introduction of QSEN competency education would be an effective intervention applicable to diverse care settings, including academic medical centers, community hospitals, long-term care facilities, outpatient clinics, and specialty care centers (AlRatrouf et al., 2025). The pre-implementation materials consist of specialized training staff, proper training facilities, proven evaluation tools, and management expertise. Simulation-

based learning technology resources, curriculum development materials, and organizational leadership commitment would be mandatory. Obstacles might include staff resistance to change, competing interests, and finding sufficient funds.

Intra-implementation resources would entail continued faculty support, secured nurse time, adequate provision of substitute staffing, and technical help with the educational elements. The various teaching modalities required by the study will necessitate a range of educational materials, including case materials, simulation equipment, and group learning areas (AlRatrouf et al., 2025). The primary complications in this stage are maintaining high-level patient care during periods when staff are in training and ensuring program uniformity. The post-implementation assets would focus on sustainability by incorporating continuous evaluation, refresher curricula, apprenticeship training for new nurses, and quality control programs that assess the impact of competency on patient care.

A financial impact analysis indicates a high overall cost of implementation but significant long-term benefits. Decreases in medication errors of 15-25 percent are commonly experienced in hospitals with comprehensive nurse education programs, resulting in an average annual savings of more than \$2.8 million per 300-bed hospital. Additionally, enhanced nursing competencies are associated with a 10-20 percent reduction in patient readmissions, resulting in substantial savings in value-based reimbursement (Rodziewicz et al., 2024). Patient satisfaction gains would be significant, given the informed basis for improved patient-focused care capabilities and the reported study outcomes, which show an improvement in patient satisfaction scales of 12-18%. There would be a subsequent increase in nursing satisfaction, characterized by enhanced professional confidence and job satisfaction. The research has demonstrated that the retention rate of nurses can increase by 20 to 30 percent after an extensive competency program.

Patient safety would be significantly higher based on enhanced safety competencies in trained nurses, and all-inclusive nurse education programs would lead to 25-40 percent decreases in preventable adverse events and 30-50 percent enhancements in the safety reporting culture. The holistic aspect of QSEN competency development also yields a synergistic outcome in that gains in one area strengthen gains in others, leading to transformational changes in overall nursing practice and healthcare delivery (AlRatrout et al., 2025). The study confirms QSEN as a viable method of quality improvement, as educational interventions are a potent means of systematic healthcare improvement, introducing sustainable changes not only in individual learning outcomes but also in organizational transformation and the delivery of better-quality patient care.

Application to Nursing

Nurses will need to adapt their approach to working and professional development, as they have traditionally been oriented towards this, to incorporate the competencies of QSEN into their nursing practice. The competencies must be employed by nurses across all spheres of practice, where they deliver direct care to their patients, as well as in administrative roles, thus forming a comprehensive paradigm of professional achievement. This process of practicing the QSEN principles enables nursing by incorporating three crucial concepts: patient safety, high-quality results, and continuous improvement (QSEN, 2022). With the implementation of QSEN competencies in practice, nurses will become more critical and effective communicators and will be able to analyze the issues that impact patient care at the system level. The competencies are highly coherent with becoming a more skilled professional, facilitating continuous learning and adjustment to the new trends in healthcare. Organizations implementing QSEN in practice will need resources, training, and commitment to improving the quality and safety of their leaders

(AlRatrouf et al., 2025). Numerous programs, such as the VA Quality Scholars Program, have demonstrated that these competencies can be effectively implemented in practice by training interprofessional fellows to utilize improvement science and practical methods.

Practice

QSEN skills are implemented in clinical practice in various initiatives and programs to ensure patient safety and quality of care. Using these competencies, nurses are safety-conscious, engage in team rounds and quality improvement projects, and utilize scientifically based practice guidelines to inform their actions (Houser, 2023). The competencies enable nurses to represent individuals and families effectively, contributing to organizational improvement. Practical ways include standardized approaches to communication, like SBAR and others, adhering to checklists and procedures to ensure standardized processes of care, and incorporating technology to facilitate accurate drug administration and documentation (QSEN, 2022). The net impact of QSEN on nursing practice is a positive patient outcome, fewer errors, and more satisfied nurses.

Education

QSEN skills are transforming nursing education. A range of topics, from introductory lessons to advanced clinical practice, now include these competencies in school curricula. Development programs for staff have been crucial for the successful implementation of quality and safety concepts (QSEN, 2022), as they enable teachers to enhance their understanding of these concepts. The QSEN repository features reviewed educational tools to assist faculty in designing practical and innovative approaches to learning competencies (Houser, 2023). Simulation-based learning has become valuable for students to develop QSEN skills, identify and address quality and safety concerns, and practice in a safe environment. There is a stronger connection between universities and hospitals, which enables students to witness and participate

in real-life quality improvement activities (Houser, 2023). Current assessment methods examine how knowledge is acquired and how attitudes and skills are developed for quality and safety. QSEN competencies shape nursing education in many institutions and influence accreditation, licensing tests, and ongoing education requirements. The advanced skills acquired in graduate programs enable nurses to assume leadership roles in enhancing quality and patient safety.

Research

Studies involving QSEN competencies have been ongoing since the initiative was launched to examine the implementation of these competencies, the outcome measures, and their impact on patient outcomes. Several studies have investigated the role of simulated practice, case discussions, and practical experiences in fostering the development of QSEN competencies (QSEN, 2022). The impact of nurses trained through QSEN on patient safety has also been studied, with researchers showing that this initiative has contributed to improved metrics, fewer mistakes, and higher quality of care in QSEN-compliant organizations (Houser, 2023). The Systems Thinking Scale has now made it possible to assess the effectiveness of interventions and track the evolution of competency over the years. Implementation science has allowed its researchers to learn what makes it easier or harder to apply QSEN in both learning and the workplace. Researchers have also tracked the career trajectories of QSEN-prepared nurses to investigate the duration of time they retained their training, their work satisfaction, and their career progression. Investigations of QSEN competencies have taken place at healthcare facilities worldwide, enabling individuals across various sectors to gain knowledge about quality and safety (QSEN, 2022). Further research is necessary on the impact of developing technology on QSEN, the connection between QSEN and healthcare equality, and the promotion of advanced skills associated with different nursing roles.

Conclusion

Nurses can now better address healthcare system concerns due to the QSEN skills, which have influenced nursing education and practice. The effort demonstrates that teamwork, research-driven training, and well-planned improvements can lead to breakthroughs in professional practice. Healthcare workers' job satisfaction, patient outcomes, and teamwork have improved with the implementation of QSEN competencies in nursing education and practice. Nursing has led the push to enhance healthcare quality and safety via system thinking and continuous improvement. QSEN competencies help healthcare providers address new challenges and deliver patient-centered, evidence-based care. The development of advanced abilities and international QSEN applications make the effort current and noteworthy. Everyone must commit, resources must be available, and leaders must be involved for QSEN implementation to succeed. Future policy should promote healthcare equity, new technology, and specialty expertise. The QSEN legacy suggests that nursing is now focused on continuous improvement, patient safety, and the broader perspective, which will be crucial to the profession.

References

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