

Building Confidence Through Practice: Evaluating a Student-Led Flu Vaccination Clinic Using Retractable Safety Needles

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Nursing students often graduate with limited experience vaccinating. Low-fidelity simulations using task trainers are effective for skill development, but are not realistic and, when used alone, limit engagement with the interpersonal and clinical aspects of care. The introduction of retractable safety syringes designed to minimize needlestick injuries has advanced clinical practice, yet students have limited exposure to them. McGill's Vascular Access Student Club organised a vaccination clinic at the Sakoto Shibata Clinical Nursing Laboratories to bridge this gap by assessing the impact of retractable safety syringes on patient experience and the skills and confidence of student vaccinators. Vaccinated participants included 87 nursing students and laboratory staff who completed a post-vaccination survey rating their experience. Most rated 5/5 in terms of "safety" and "comfort", with a median pain score of 1/10. Professionalism and technical skills were rated 5/5 by 89% of respondents, while 92% were "very likely" to recommend the clinic. Vaccinators were graduating students who underwent mandatory training. Of 11 student vaccinators, 80% had no prior experience vaccinating with safety needles, and 60% reported "very high confidence," up from 0% pre-event. 70% felt more comfortable using safety syringes than non-safety syringes, and 90% reported that vaccinating real patients was "different" or "very different" from simulated practice. Results showed that this student-led clinic using retractable safety syringes improved patient experiences, boosted student confidence and skills, and transferred the learning from low-fidelity training to a clinical practice.

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