

Advanced Education to Prevent Forensic Nurse Anxiety Associated with Providing Witness Testimony: A Quality Improvement Project

Dominique Norphleet BSN, RN, CEN, FNE-A & Dr. Miki Goodwin PhD, RN, PHN, CNE, NEA-BC, FAAN



Introduction

Forensic Nurse Examiner (FNE) is a specialized field that requires extensive training in the fundamentals of forensic science, genitourinary exams, victimology, and court testimony. FNEs provide medical care for victims of domestic abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, and sexual crimes; then collect and secure the evidence of said crime for transfer to law enforcement. Having performed the forensic exam, the FNE must then be prepared to provide factual or expert witness testimony which educates a jury (and judge) about the exam that he or she has performed. However, when surveyed, most forensic nurses rate their witness testimonies as “emotionally unnerving” despite the trial preparation training and rigorous hands-on exam hours required to become a forensic nurse examiner.

Purpose & Aims

The purpose of this evidence-based quality improvement project is to develop, implement, and evaluate an educational module that reduces or eliminates the anxiety of providing witness testimony for forensic nurse examiners.

The two aims of this project are to:

1. Produce a user friendly and sustainable online education module.
2. Reduced forensic nurse examiner’s anxiety related to providing witness testimony by implementing a best practice educational module

Methods

Online education module composed 3 evidence-based themes noted in the literature review

Design: single-group pre-post test intervention design

Sample: 14 practicing forensic nurse examiners (FNEs) unit of inner-city hospital

Measures: Court Related Stress Scale -Revised (CRSS-R) tool. 10 question : 0 = no anxiety, 30 = most severe anxiety

Analysis: Wilcoxon Signed Rank test

Sample

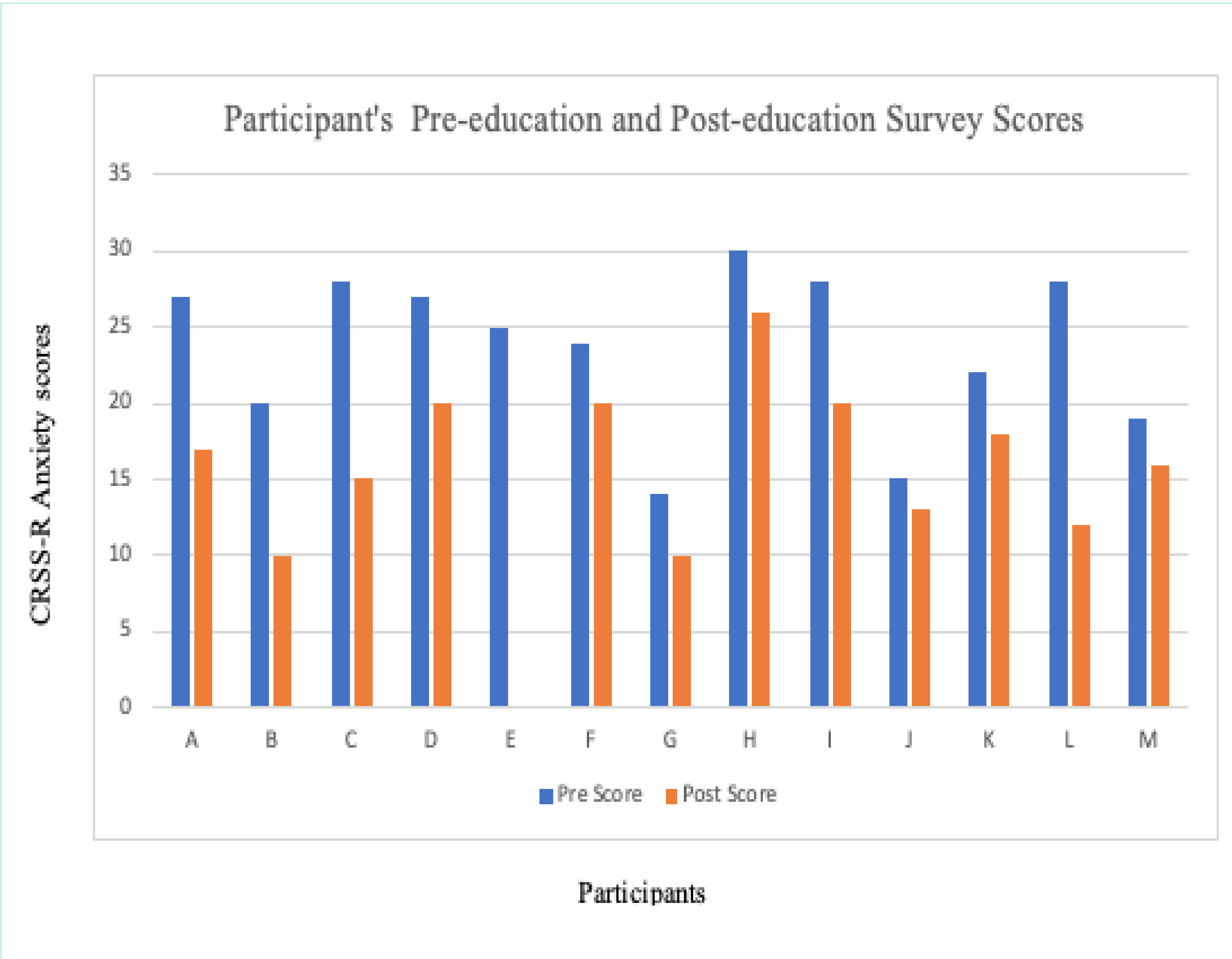
Demographic Characteristics	(N = 14)
Years of Experience, mean (SD)	4.0 (7.6)
Sex, n (%)	
Male	0 (0%)
Female	14 (100%)
Certified Forensic Nurse Examiners, n (%)	
Yes	13 (92.8 %)
No	1 (7.1%)

SD = standard deviation

Results

- Using a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, pre-module CRSS-R scores were high with a median score of 25.0 (5.22 SD). At post-module CRSS-R scores were low with a median score of 16.5 (4.75 SD). Participant scores decreased overall from pre to post- module.
- The p-value was found to be $p = 0.002$. At the 5% level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$)
- Aims met were statistically significant & Clinically significant

Table 1: Results



Conclusion

- Contributes to the advancement of the forensic nursing discipline by adding to its body of evidence-based resources
- Reducing FNE anxiety also decreases acquittal rates of the accused,
- Increases FNE confidence, promoting retention and job satisfaction
- Provides an outline for those seeking to evaluate forensic nurse anxiety related to witness testimony and demonstrates a structure approach to implementing an education module to reduce/prevent said anxiety.