Reflection of Assisted Experiences

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This semester has definitely challenged my abilities. There have been four areas in which I have seen great progression including the adaptation of a new practice, my communication skills, my prenatal assessments and lastly HIPAA confidentiality. The most challenging thing at first was learning how things are done in the new practice I am with. Most of what I know of birth comes from my experiences assisting CNMs in a birth center. Going to an LM homebirth practice has made me step back to learn not only the personal preferences of my preceptor but also learning the new limitations and requirements that are different from the nurse world. It definitely slowed my intended progress but I am grateful because I have learned so many new things.

In my observation phase(which lasted at least half the semester) I learned ways to navigate communication in ways that engage the client instead of sounding like reading from a script. I have learned some many of the right questions to ask that lead the conversation along in answering all the needs of the visit without directly asking. I have also witnessed communication for difficult situations like SABs and although I still do not feel prepared for it, I at least know how to begin verbally supporting someone through it.

I have improved tremendously in assessing fundal height and fetal position. The thing I admire most about this process is that I know when I have been incorrect and have not been scared to say so and ask for help. This has really helped me in learning what is correct and has allowed me to feel more confident. I have also started to become familiar with heart rates without timing which is something I always wondered about and have tested my guesses with my watch and am working towards that audible skill.

I have taken on the responsibility of initial newborn exams which has been a lot of fun for me. I have witnessed them so many times at work but never performed any aspect on my own. I was extremely intimidated by the demand of information at first and took about an hour on my first try. Since then I have done a few more and am slowly remembering my checks without requiring the prompt provided to me to study. I have also begun to learn ways to be vigilant of some criteria ahead of time such as the Moro reflex prior to the exam. I am also picking up on ways to be efficient with time and gathering my rhythm in exams, starting at the head and working my way down. The only challenge to these exams has been that we perform them in the parents’ arms and so it can be a challenge but has again pushed me to learn gentle ways to get things done. The rest of my assisting skills in birth have been just the same as my job as a birth assistant so I haven’t had a ton of progression there but am also in no rush to take it all on- I believe everything has its time and patience is what is most important.

The thing I have been trying to work on the most is maintaining client confidentiality. In my life(as I am sure is the case with many) I have talked to those closest to me about everything and this transition has been difficult because I have to keep it all to myself. I have made a conscious effort to used non-identifying language when speaking and learning the things that are appropriate to talk about and those that aren’t. I have been really critical about my accountability and integrity as a student, knowing that this work put in will roll over easily when I become licensed. These challenges have presented to me early in the semester but have been targets of my attention in efforts to bring on success. I have not deterred from responsibility or accountability, instead taken it head on to get past it.

Right now, my clinical strategy is to continue absorbing the tremendous amounts of knowledge my preceptor has to offer me. I have one phase two clinical class remaining which will complete those requirements prior to the end of my commitment in this practice. I will however continue to be present to learn and gather every bit of experience possible. I have learned that the hands-on experience makes this process easier to digest- the experience I came in with from my job has really propelled me forward in my learning and I would like to continue on that trajectory. I am excited to be engaging as a choice because the weight of deadlines will be lifted and I can just be in the environment, absorbing.

My initial plan for clinic was to take the normal one clinic a semester track, but I have invested so many hours, I added the second class to get credit which puts me at a faster clinical track than originally anticipated. I do know that I will not be able to continue taking the current amount of credits while being in clinic, so my plan is to lower my work load so that I can manage it all well. This semester has stressed me out on the didactic end of school in conjunction with clinic and has also shown me how to prioritize and organize everything. My family has been extremely supportive but also misses my home presence so I know I need to scale back despite wanting to push through.

I am still very unsure of how I plan to practice as a midwife. Every day brings new observations and “ah ha” moments for me. I know in time I will have a lot of it figured out but my main focus is just learning to support the various types of clients and deciphering the needs of everyone I have learned very early on that I am very good at adapting and so that is the most prominent pattern I have noticed about myself. I have been able to morph to whatever type of support clients have needed. One thing that has been a very challenging thing to practice is healthy boundaries and that goes beyond being a student and into other birth jobs I have taken on. I have always been someone you can reach at any time for anything and I have learned that it isn’t healthy. I have chosen to set boundaries around my availability and learn to say no. I will continue to set these boundaries to help combat the burnout I hear so many encounter. This semester has been amazing and rigorous and has given me so much life and I look forward to more time in clinic.