

# Implementing an Undergraduate Nursing Elective Advanced Perinatal Course and Its Effect on Perceived Perinatal Nursing Knowledge and Self-Efficacy Levels of Students Who Aim To Enter a Perinatal Specialty as New Graduate Nurses



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Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). expectant-mother-nurse-363x207px [Image]. <https://www.cdc.gov/pregnancy/index.html>

## Abstract

Nursing schools face challenges within maternal/newborn practicum courses for undergraduate nursing students, such as a lack of consistent clinical sites or experiences that capture the high acuity needs of perinatal environments. Additionally, perinatal units face challenges in orienting and retaining new graduate nurses, while new graduate nurses entering perinatal units may be likely to experience feelings of insecurity or self-doubt due to perceived inadequate preparation for such specialties (Leshner et al., 2021). There are multiple negative impacts that may stem from a lack of confident and competent novice perinatal nurses. The rise in maternal morbidity and mortality rates in the United States are of particular concern, and knowledge gaps on behalf of novice perinatal nurses may result in the lack of skills and confidence in recognizing complications and intervening appropriately, potentially jeopardizing patient safety. The literature suggests that perinatal units face challenges in effectively orientating new graduate nurses, leading to burnout and financial burdens (Dickerson et al., 2022). Recognizing the potential benefits of improving preparation for students interested in entering a perinatal specialty as new graduates, such as improved patient outcomes and increased staff retention, this study aims to analyze the impact of an elective advanced perinatal course on student perception of knowledge and self-efficacy levels for those who aim to enter a perinatal specialty as a new graduate nurse. Content will be focused on advancing knowledge of normal physiologic birth, high-risk obstetrical and newborn considerations, obstetric emergencies, perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, bereavement care, diversity/equity/inclusion care, and resiliency tips.

Keywords: perinatal, new graduate nurses, nursing school, obstetrics

## Introduction

### Background

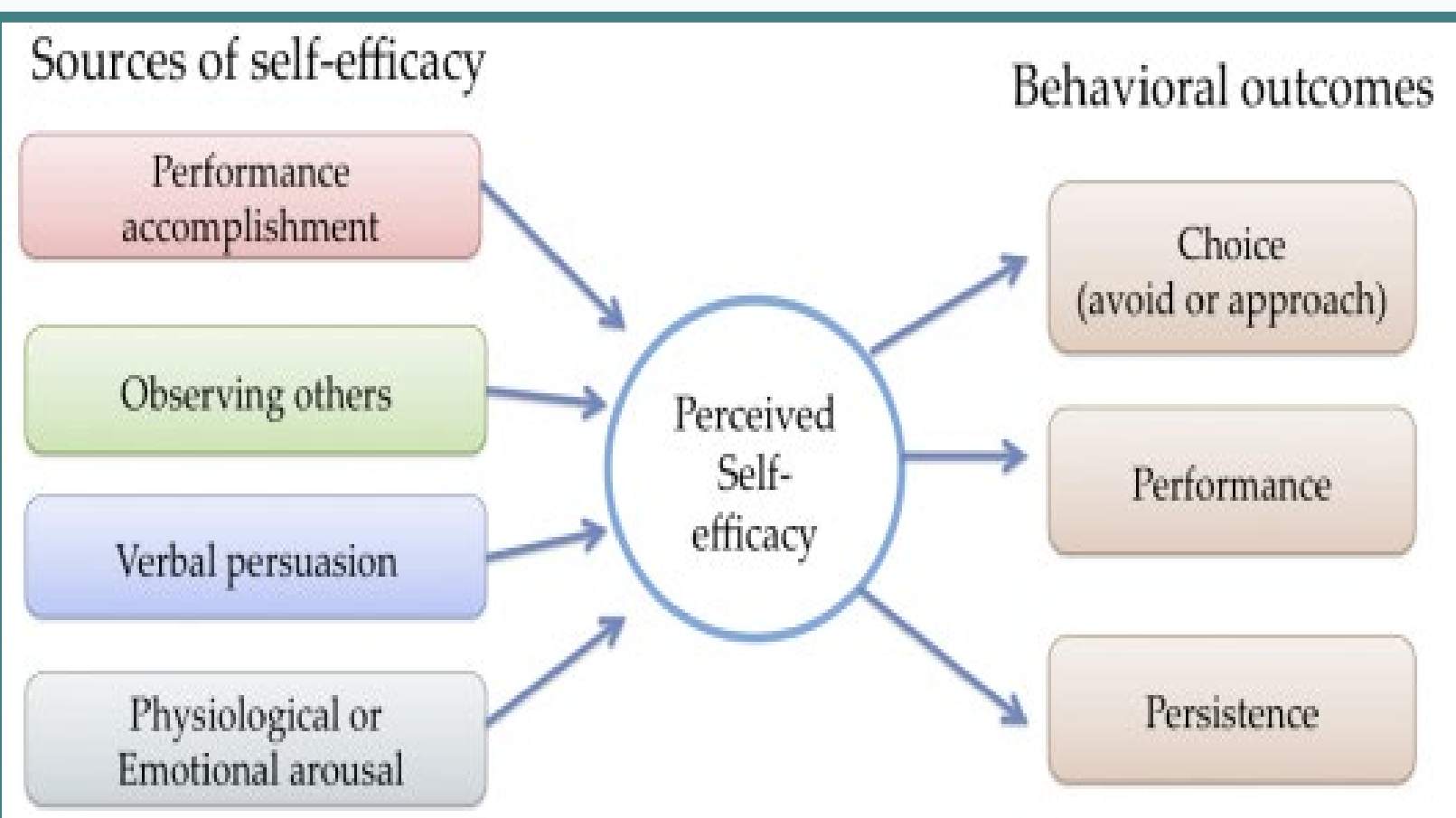
The challenge for prelicensure nursing students to obtain adequate maternal/newborn nursing clinical experiences is widespread, leading to concerns that new graduate nurses may not feel prepared to take on the challenge of entering such a unique specialty field right after graduation.

### Study Purpose

To examine the effect of an elective advanced perinatal nursing course on the perceived perinatal nursing knowledge and self-efficacy levels of undergraduate senior nursing students who desire to enter a perinatal/obstetrical specialty as a new graduate registered nurse.

### Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy serves as the guiding framework for this initiative. Self-efficacy was defined by Bandura as the individual's perception of one's ability to perform specific behaviors through four processes: cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes (Shorey & Lopez, 2021).



Richardson, A. (2019). Self-efficacy model. [Image]. AIP Conference Proceedings 2109, 120004. <https://aip.scitation.org/doi/pdf/10.1063/1.5110148>

## Methodology

### Research Question

- In second-semester senior undergraduate nursing students, how does completion of an advanced perinatal course affect student self-perception of perinatal nursing knowledge and self-efficacy levels for students who aim to enter a perinatal specialty as new graduate nurses?

### Design and Sample

- Mixed methods quasi-experimental study
- Senior-level nursing students enrolled in an elective advanced perinatal course within a midwestern baccalaureate university.

### Data Collection and Analysis

- A pre and post course survey will be completed by participants.
- Quantitative data will investigate student perception of perinatal nursing knowledge and perceived self-efficacy levels. Qualitative data will be collected through open-ended questions and analyzed for themes.

### Researcher Role

- Examine the impact of an elective advanced perinatal course on student perception of perinatal nursing knowledge and perceived self-efficacy levels for those students who aim to enter a perinatal specialty as a new graduate nurse and to disseminate findings to the Emporia State University Department of Nursing.

### Strategies for Minimizing Bias and Error

- Survey results will be coded confidentially
- Data will be analyzed by multiple researchers

### Ethical Considerations

- Institutional Review Board approval and informed consent would be obtained prior to conducting research
- Participation in the study would not affect student grade in the course

## Review of the Literature

A review of the literature allowed for delineation of several themes relating to new graduate nurses entering a perinatal nursing specialty and the need for innovative teaching strategies to better prepare students for these future roles.

### Nursing Schools Face Challenges in Providing Adequate Maternal/Newborn Practicum Experiences

Nursing schools across the United States are faced with challenges in providing students with adequate maternal/newborn clinical experiences, leading to new graduate nurses who secure a position in a perinatal specialty to likely experiences difficulties in their professional transition. Both Leshner et al. (2021) and Guimond et al. (2019) note that nursing schools also face challenges in reflecting the true acuity and care complexity that are present in acute care perinatal units. Raman et al. (2019) also notes that nursing schools face additional challenges when patients may choose to deny a student's presence within the obstetric setting, leading to unequal opportunities for students to obtain obstetrical clinical experiences.

### Orienting and Retaining New Graduate Perinatal Nurses Presents Challenges

Leshner et al. (2021) notes challenges regarding new graduate nurse orientation and retention rates, such as intense time and patience requirements on behalf of preceptors and management, while Dickerson et al. (2022) also attributes these concerns to the potential for financial burdens on units due to longer orientation periods or turnover. Both Dickerson et al. and Leshner et al. identify that novice perinatal nurses may experience feelings of insecurity, self-doubt, and fear, placing them at risk for burnout.

### Perinatal Orientation Programs Can Improve Outcomes

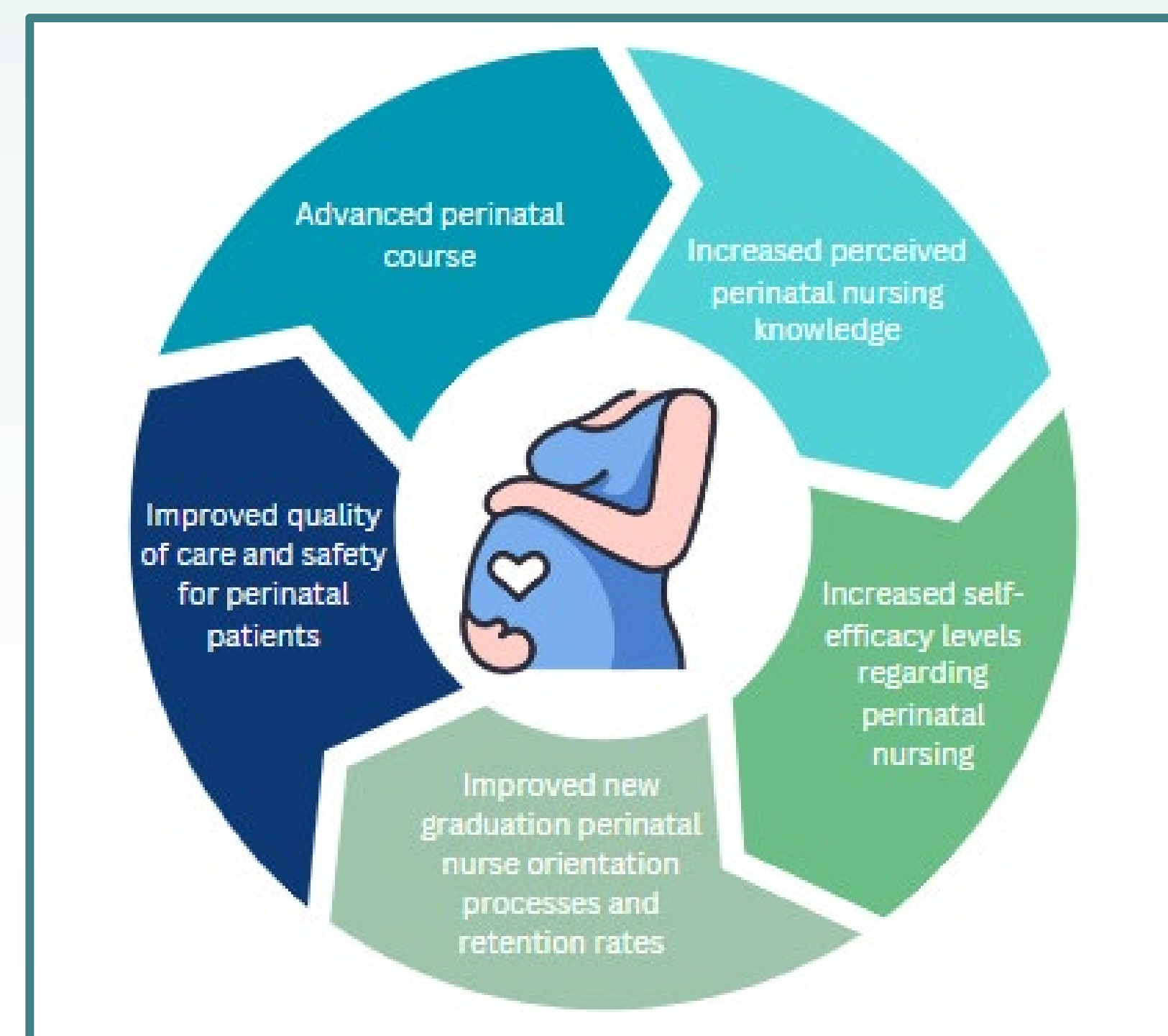
Smith (2022) noted an 83% retention rate with successful orientation outcomes when implementing a perinatal orientation program for novice labor and delivery nurses, and Leshner et al. (2021) noted a dramatic decrease in the need for traveling nurses after implementing their new graduate perinatal internship. Burgess et al. (2019) and Sommers et al. (2019) both implemented variations of perinatal education into undergraduate nursing curricula through introduction of labor support workshops for senior undergraduate nursing students focused on supporting physiologic birth, both noting improvements in student self-efficacy scores and self-perceived competence.

## Design and Implementation



## Anticipated Findings

- Based upon the review of the literature and researcher intuition, it is anticipated that students who complete this elective course will report higher levels perceived perinatal nursing knowledge and self-efficacy levels regarding on the post-survey as compared to the pre-survey, providing them a perceived advantage when preparing to seek a position as a new graduate registered nurse in a perinatal specialty.



## Conclusion

### Implications for Nursing

- While the literature supports benefits to implementing perinatal orientation programs in acute care units, the evidence supporting implementing of advanced perinatal education in an undergraduate nursing curriculum is lacking.
- As there is a need for improved perinatal outcomes in the United States and a current nursing shortage, this study aims to add valuable knowledge on the effects of implementing such a course in undergraduate nursing curriculum.
- Improving preparation for nursing students who aim to enter a perinatal specialty may increase the knowledge and confidence levels of these future new graduate nurses, improving the quality of care and staff retention rates.

### Limitations

- As this study will be conducted in a rural, midwestern baccalaureate program, it may not be generalizable beyond the sample population.
- The rigor of this nursing program creates a limit to the length of time available to implement this course.

### Recommendations for Future Research

- Could elective courses be designed for other nursing specialties?
- What content is most beneficial for the nursing student interested in entering a perinatal specialty?
- How long should this course be, and is face to face, online, or hybrid education preferred by the student?
- Does completion of this course provide the student with an advantage from the perception of perinatal unit managers?

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