

RESEARCH BRIEF: Evaluating ATI's Live Review course: How does it contribute to the NCLEX preparation process?



The NCLEX is a high-stakes exam that determines whether a nursing student will be permitted to enter the ranks of practicing nurses. ATI's Live Review is an intensive review course that assists students in the final phases of preparation for NCLEX. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the course, self-reported NCLEX pass rates and survey data were analyzed. A preliminary pass rate of 97% for students completing the Live Review course suggests that it is an effective aid in NCLEX preparation. Student perceptions of their own preparedness for NCLEX and of the Live Review experience are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

For students at the end of nursing school, passing the NCLEX represents the final gate prior to entering the profession. As such, both students and the programs that prepare them have an interest in students' NCLEX success. For the student who has invested time, money, and effort in pursuit of the goal of becoming a practicing nurse, NCLEX failure carries real costs, both financial and personal (Roa, et al, 2011). Additionally, one of the criteria by which an educational program is judged is the first-time NCLEX pass rate of its graduates (CCNE, 2009; NLNAC, 2011). Given the implications, it is no surprise that both students and programs invest substantial effort and energy into preparing for the exam, both throughout the program and immediately before taking the NCLEX.

Recognizing the importance of the immediate pre-NCLEX preparation period, ATI has developed a suite of products focused specifically on providing students the tools they need for NCLEX. One of these products is ATI's Live Review course, a multi-day on-site NCLEX review conducted by one of ATI's experienced, Master's-degreed nurse educators. In view of its goal of continually evaluating and improving its products, ATI

initiated an ongoing investigation to determine the value of its Live Review course in helping students in the final phase of preparation reach their goal of passing NCLEX.

The following research questions are explored in this paper:

- *What is the first-time NCLEX pass rate for students who participate in a Live Review?*
- *What is the typical NCLEX test length for students who participate in a Live Review?*
- *What are students' perceptions of their own NCLEX preparedness?*
- *What are students' experiences and perceptions of the Live Review course?*

METHODOLOGY

Participants in ATI's Live Review courses during the months of December 2011 and January 2012 were given an opportunity to receive a post-NCLEX survey asking about their perceptions of the Live Review course and their preparation for the NCLEX. In March 2012, surveys were sent to 1,164 Live Review participants who had indicated that they planned to take the NCLEX prior to March 1, 2012. 170 of these completed the survey (14.6% response rate). Of these, 148 RN and 13 PN students provided NCLEX results, while 7 indicated that they had not yet taken the NCLEX, and 2 students did not reveal their NCLEX outcome. Students who passed

the NCLEX then responded to a survey consisting of both Likert-type items and open-ended questions.

RESULTS

Pass Rate

For the 161 students who provided outcome data, the overall first-time pass rate was 97%; 144 of 148 RN students (97.3%) and 12 of 13 PN students (92.3%) passed on the first attempt. These pass rates are substantially higher than the national first-attempt NCLEX pass rates (U.S. educated) of 91.23% for RN and 83.7% for PN during the same time period (NCSBN, 2012a).

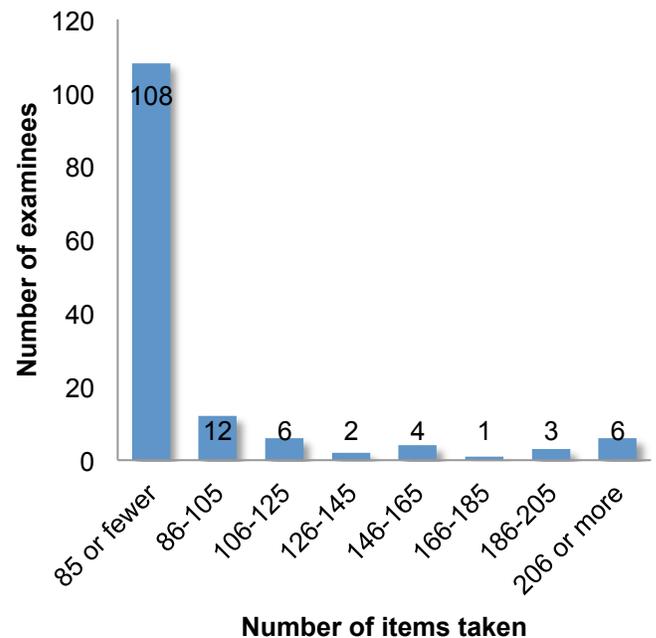
Number of Questions

Students who passed were also asked how many questions they took on NCLEX. Because the NCLEX is a computer-adaptive test, the length of the test varies; the NCLEX algorithm presents questions until it can determine with 95% confidence that the examinee is either above or below the passing standard, or until the maximum number of items or time limit is reached (NCSBN, 2012). The length of the RN test is specified to range from 75 to 265 questions, while the length of the PN test ranges from 85 to 205 questions. Although it is possible to pass with any number of questions, students passing with relatively few questions did so through consistently providing correct answers to progressively difficult questions. In this study, 108 of 142 RN students reported passing with 85 or fewer questions; the full distribution is provided in Figure 1. Eight out of 11 PN students reported that they passed with 85 questions, the minimum PN test length. By comparison, the NCSBN reports that in 2009, the average number of questions presented was about 121 for RN students and 115 for PN students (NCSBN, 2012b). Although students can pass the exam

with any number of questions, passing the exam with a shorter number of questions is indicative of exceptional subject mastery.

Student Perceptions

Figure 1. Number of items taken by RN examinees



While NCLEX pass rate is an important indicator of the effectiveness of the Live Review program, student perceptions of the Live Review experience and how it helped them prepare for the test were also of interest. Accordingly, students were asked for feedback in three broad categories: preparation for NCLEX, Live Review content, and Live Review instructor.

Preparedness

In addition to their NCLEX outcome, students were asked to respond to questions about how prepared they felt to take NCLEX at three points in time: immediately after completing the Live Review; after studying independently, immediately before taking NCLEX; and after taking NCLEX. Student

“the [Live Review user] overall first-time pass rate was 97%...substantially higher than the national first-attempt”

responses were on a 4-point scale from “Not prepared” to “Very well-prepared.” Responses in the top two categories (Well-prepared and Very well-prepared) are displayed in Figure 2.

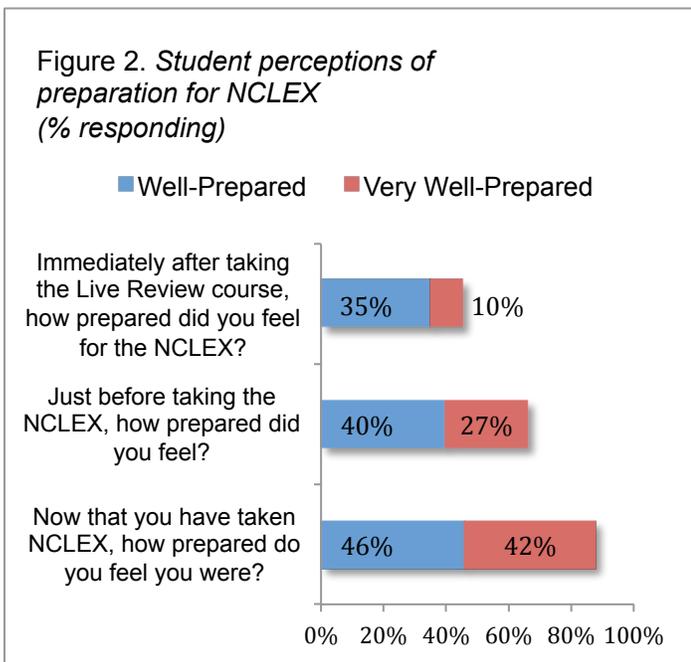
Responses show that student feeling of preparation is at its lowest point immediately following the Live Review, and increases to a high following NCLEX. This post-Live Review feeling of low preparation is consistent with having been confronted with the specifics of the task that is NCLEX; students are likely to feel overwhelmed. Although they have been given a road map for preparation through the review process, they have not yet had a chance to study independently. After preparing for NCLEX and prior to testing, students reported an increased feeling of preparation, but not as high as after taking the test. This is consistent with the high-stakes nature of the exam, and the fact that the overwhelming majority of students did succeed on first attempt.

prepared than they thought they were just before taking the test.

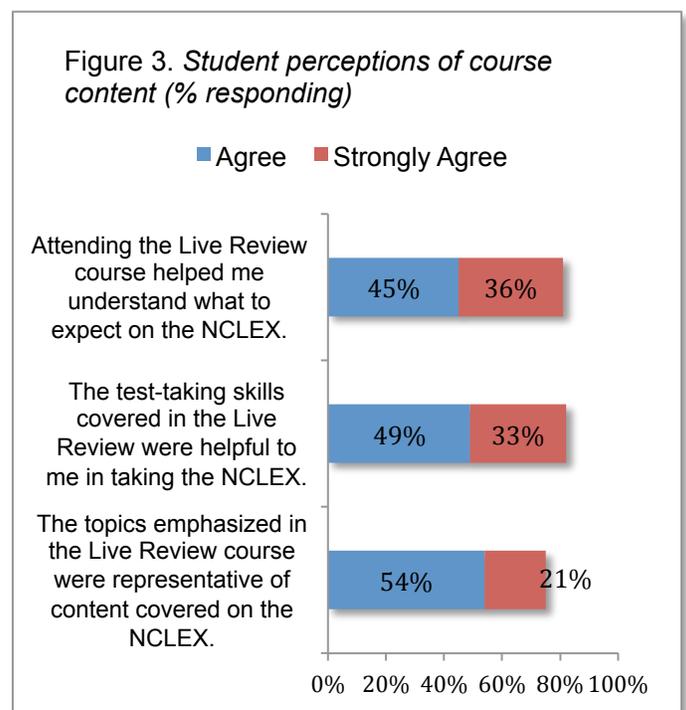
Live Review content
Questions of course content are

“over 87 percent of participants rated themselves as well-prepared or very well-prepared in retrospect”

of key importance in the development of a Live Review that is of maximum benefit to students. The Live Review provides not only a nursing content review, but also a general NCLEX overview and instruction in test-taking strategies. Students were asked to rate the value of each of these three components (general overview, test-taking strategy, and nursing content) on a 4-point scale, and their responses were strongly positive. For each question, over 75% of students responded positively regarding each of the three components (either Agree or Strongly Agree). These responses are displayed in Figure 3.



Notably, over 87 percent of participants rated themselves as well-prepared or very well-prepared in retrospect. That is, students having taken NCLEX were able to look back and assess themselves as having been more

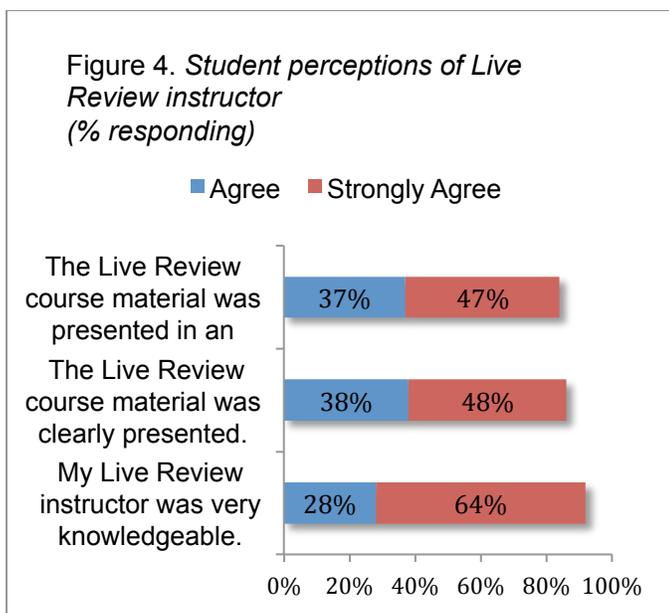


Comments by students also reflected the value of the content review; “I liked that they covered material that was specific to the needs of my class. They were also welcoming to any

other specific topics that needed to be covered individually,” said one.

Live Review instructor

Because the Live Review experience is, by nature, largely dependent on the quality of the Live Review instructor, it was also important to garner students’ impressions of their instructor. Three questions asked students to rate how interesting and clear the presentation was, as well as how knowledgeable the instructor was. For all three items, student response was over 85% positive (Agree or Strongly Agree), with the highest percent positive in response to the instructor knowledge question (92.2% positive). Responses to instructor-related Likert items are shown in Figure 4.



Correspondingly, when students were given an opportunity to share comments about the Live Review, the most common subject of comments was the instructor, and the most common instructor attribute mentioned was “knowledgeable.” As one student stated, “The instructor was amazing and so knowledgeable about NCLEX. I asked a million questions and she helped me to feel prepared.”

CONCLUSION

As the culmination of a program of study and the final hurdle that must be met before nursing students become practicing nurses, the NCLEX generates a great deal of interest and anxiety among students and the programs that prepare them. The period of final preparation for the NCLEX is of particular interest as students seek to ensure their readiness to challenge the exam.

The results presented in this paper suggest that ATI’s Live Review course makes a substantial contribution to that preparation. RN and PN students who attend a Live Review pass the NCLEX at a rate that is substantially higher than the national pass rate. Additionally, student self-perceptions of preparedness reveal an understandable progression consistent with the high-stakes nature of the NCLEX. Students rate their level of preparation at its lowest point immediately after attending the Live Review. In this case, the anxiety around the test is somewhat adaptive because it motivates students to prepare more thoroughly. After following the preparation plan provided through the Live Review, students report an increase in feelings of preparedness, and this feeling increases even more upon actually taking the NCLEX.

Students’ positive ratings of both the Live Review content and their instructor reveal this program as an optimal setting to prepare students for NCLEX success. Through targeted content review and test-taking strategy instruction, students acquire the knowledge and confidence they need to approach the NCLEX prepared for success.

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