

2025 Joseph and Joan Pranis Kenney Endowed Conference for Excellence in Nursing Education

October 29, 2025

UPMC Harrisburg School of Nursing

8-8:45

Registration

Coffee & Tea available

8:50-9

Welcome

Dr. Brandy Hershberger, DNP, MSN, RN, CEN
Chief Nursing Officer & Vice President
Academic Affairs

9-10:15

Clinical Learning for All: Inclusive Strategies for Supporting Autistic Neurodivergent Nursing Students

Ellen G. Osborne, Med
Assistant Director of Training, Clinical
Instructor, Department of Psychiatry
Linda Varblow, MPH, Autism Specialist
TEACCH Administration & Research, Clinical
Instructor, Department of Psychiatry
TEACCH Autism Program

10:15-10:30

Break

10:30-11:30

Exploring Virtual Reality Simulation in Nursing Education

Tanae Traister, PhD, RN
Assistant Dean, Assistant Professor: School of
Nursing & Health Sciences, Pennsylvania
College of Technology

11:30-12:30

Artificial Intelligence Applications for Nursing Faculty in Academic Environments

Jennifer Manning, DNS, ACNS-BC, CNE, FCNS
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs,
Coordinator Adult Gerontology, Clinical Nurse
Specialist Program

12:30-1

Closing Remarks and Evaluations

CEU's available at:

[UPMC - Center for Continuing Education in the
Health Sciences](#)

CEU code will be provided to complete evaluations
and to obtain CEU's.

Opportunities in Nursing Education

After attending this conference, participants will be able to:

Clinical Learning for All: Inclusive Strategies for Supporting Autistic Neurodivergent Nursing Students

- Briefly describe common learning styles and cognitive processing traits often seen in students on the autism spectrum or with related neurodivergent profiles.
- Identify key challenges these students may encounter during clinical instruction, particularly in areas such as clinical judgment, cognitive flexibility, and communication.
- Apply inclusive, strengths-based strategies to support success in clinical learning environments for students who think and process differently.

Exploring Virtual Reality Simulation in Nursing Education

- Identify the impact of virtual reality (VR) simulation on nursing students' anxiety levels
- Assess the effect of VR simulation on students' development of therapeutic communication skills
- Discuss the educational value and practical integration of VR simulation in nursing education

Artificial Intelligence Applications for Nursing Faculty in Academic Environments

- Identify and describe at least three practical applications of artificial intelligence (AI) that can enhance teaching, research, and administrative tasks for nursing faculty in academic settings
- Evaluate the potential benefits and challenges of integrating AI tools into nursing curricula and pedagogical strategies.
- Formulate an initial plan for incorporating a specific AI application into their own nursing education or research practices.

Program Evaluation/CE Certificates

Event is sponsored by UPMC Schools of Nursing with a target audience of Nursing Instructors.

In support of improving patient care, the University of Pittsburgh is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), to provide continuing education for the healthcare team.

Nursing (CNE): The maximum number of hours awarded for this Continuing Nursing Education activity is **5 contact hours** and will be awarded when the entire program is attended and evaluation complete.

Other Healthcare Professionals will receive a certificate of attendance confirming the number of contact hours commensurate with the extent of participation in this activity.