Personal Birth Accounts

A Teaching Tool in Maternal Newborn Nursing

Background

- Focused writing assignment in undergraduate maternal newborn nursing course

- Students interview their own mothers about their birth experience

- "What happened the day I was born?"

Purpose

- Personal narratives grounded in the experience of giving birth

- Participatory learning strategy

Method

- Students were given the assignment to learn the story of their birth

- Open-ended questions focused on: birth setting, coping with labor pain, events, family support, comparison to other birth experiences, personal meaning of the birth experience.

Method

- Following informed consent, birth stories were randomly selected and analyzed

- Several student focus groups were held to discuss the effect of this assignment on student learning

Results

Students found it a rewarding and enjoyable experience

- *"I thought it was really fun to be able to call my mom and find out about what happened when my mom had me"*

- *"It was a very fun and interesting assignment"*

Results

Students developed a sense of connectedness and respect for their mothers

- *"It was a good experience to talk to my mom about my birth and make that emotional connection"*

- *"It added a new level of admiration and respect for my mom. She was so joyful and talked about how supportive my dad was. It just gave me a different perspective of my parents"*

Results

Discovering their own birth event personalized the maternal/newborn topics in the course

- *"It made me more engaged and interested in everything we were learning in class"*

- *"It helped me pay more attention and focus during lectures"*

- *"With my mom telling me about it, it gave me a personal connection so when I went to clinical I was looking for things my mom had told me about"*

- *"My mom had gestational diabetes and I paid more attention to that lecture"*

Themes – Role of Nurse

- Significance of healthcare providers behavior. What was said and done during labor was important, and **remembered** – both the negative and the positive

- Students envisioned how they want to provide support and act as nurses when they are in that role

- This provided an important lesson that may impact their future nursing practice

Student Responses

- *"I realized that this is one of the most important times in these new mothers lives and they're going to remember it forever"*

- *"Hearing it from my mom's perspective about how important it was for the nurse to be there was something I could take away and be that kind of nurse"*

- *"It made me really aware of what a patient is feeling and that I need to explain to them what is happening"*

Themes - Appreciation

- Students repeatedly commented on a greater appreciation for their parents sacrifice and love
- Grateful for opportunity to complete this assignment
- Students had an increased sense of self-worth hearing the love and devotion their parents had for them as a newborn

Student Responses

- *"Talking about my birth reminds me of how much my mother has done for me"*

- *"I am very grateful for everything that she went through!"*

Themes – Future Birth

- Birth story helped student plan for their own future birth experience
- Empowerment - If mom can do it, then I can!
- Hopeful or fearful based on story of their mother's experience in childbirth

Results

- Birth stories contributed to student critical thinking and knowledge through discussions in clinical conferences and assignments

Results

- Birth events raised questions concerning evidence-based practices as they tried to resolve questions concerning their own births

Student Response

- *"It was a very special experience to hear my own birth story and to hear the emotion my mom still feels when she retells the details of the story of a day so long ago"*

Conclusion

- Use of personal birth accounts can be an effective teaching tool in maternal child nursing courses

- Positive outcomes for faculty and students

- Student interest in analytic inquiry is stimulated

- Students have increased motivation to personalize course content based on their personal birth account