Using Images to Examine Student Nurse Perspectives about Acute Care Nursing, Community Health Nursing and Mental Health Nursing

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BACKGROUND

- The Affordable Care Act, the trend toward increased community based care, and a recognition of the needs of people with mental health issues in all settings are examples of how the health care environment is changing.
- More collaboration across all settings is needed to decrease fragmentation of care and address complex health concerns.
- Student nurses may not have a clear understanding of nursing specialties or may have outdated images of nurses, and need to develop a schema that is responsive to future needs.
- Based on changes in health care delivery that demand greater integration of nursing specialties across the continuum of care, a new baccalaureate nursing curriculum was created with concurrent acute care, mental health, and community health nursing content.

PURPOSE

Explore the perspectives, using words and images, of junior student nurses about acute care nursing, community/public health nursing and mental health nursing at the beginning and end of courses that integrate these nursing specialties.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Qualitative inquiry based in the theoretical approach of constructivism served as a foundation for this research. Theory discussing the use of art or humanities in nursing or in science were also used to identify key themes.

DESIGN AND METHODS

Descriptive, qualitative survey conducted at the beginning and end of the junior year. Participants were asked to describe acute care nursing, community health nursing and mental health nursing with words, and draw a sketch of relationships among these specialties. Survey participation was voluntary and anonymous. The two researchers, one with community health and one with acute care nursing experience, conducted individual survey review for themes prior to collaboration for the final analysis. Drawings, “to make thinking explicit and specific” (Ainsworth, 2011) were examined as “a means to explore student’s ideas about abstract concepts” (Kose, 2008) and to “determine misconceptions” (Kose 2008). Selected drawings provide an exemplar of text placement, word choice, size or centrality that give a general idea of students understanding on the nursing specialty. Text, when included, was examined for congruence with included images.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF THEMES

Finding 1: Images of Nurses Depict Stereotypical Images

Fall Students Depict Stereotypical Images

- Images of nurses wearing caps or giving shots are more prevalent in fall than spring.
- Patients are positioned in bed.
- Community nurses are depicted at a school with the word “immunize.”

Spring Images Reflect Continuum of Care and Fewer Stereotypes

- Fall: Acute care at center with linear relationship.
- Spring: Circular-no one specialty more prominent than others, reflect a continuous process.

Finding 2: Students’ View of Relationships Among Specialties Evolves

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- Fall: Acute care at center with linear relationship.
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Finding 3: Distinct and Separate Specialties in Fall

Distinct and Separate Specialties in Fall

- Fall: Acute care hospital setting.
- Spring: Community health nursing happens in the home.
- “Community health nursing happens in the home.”
- “Care of patients experiencing mental health issues.”

Finding 4: Interconnections in Spring

Interconnections in Spring

- Spring: Acute care hospital setting.
- Spring: Community health nursing happens in the home.
- “Community health nursing happens in the home.”
- “Care of patients experiencing mental health issues.”

STUDENT NURSE DESCRIPTIONS OF NURSING SPECIALTIES

Fall: Focus on Setting & Location

- “acute care nurses care for patients in the hospital.”
- “Community health nursing happens in the home.”
- “Care of patients experiencing mental health issues.”

Spring: Added Detail & Deepening Role Perception

- Acute care nursing is: “provided for individual who suffer from physiological illness or conditions that requires interventions, typically in a hospital setting.”
- Community Health Nursing is “provided in the community where the focus is on prevention and treatment of illnesses at home, at family, community and systems levels.”
- Mental Health Nursing is “nursing care provided for individuals who suffer from mental illness...”

REFERENCES