

Nursing Education Research Conference 2018 (NERC18)

It's Good to Be Blue: A Nursing Study Abroad Blue Zone Experience in Sardinia, Italy

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Background: Blue Zones are areas of the world where, according to studies performed by National Geographic and other experts, people live measurably longer, happier lives with lower rates of chronic disease and a higher quality of life than they do in the United States. There are five identified Blue Zones, and there are nine common characteristics among these five locations, known as the Power 9. These common characteristics include information pertaining to diet, exercise, relationships, and spirituality. Sardinia, Italy was the first identified Blue Zone, and it has the greatest concentration of male centenarians in the world.

Methods: A nursing professor, along with 17 nursing students, traveled to Sardinia, Italy in May, 2017 to explore the culture, lifestyles, and ultimately the Power 9 at work. In Sardinia, students visited and interviewed centenarians in their homes, visited local markets and stores, met with longevity experts, visited a winery and olive oil mill, participated in a cooking class, and visited Blue Zone villages. They experienced typical Sardinian celebrations, meals, and social activities. Students and the faculty member analyzed the collected data using a narrative thematic analysis to determine connections to the Power 9 and overall lifestyle characteristics that aid in longevity.

Objectives: The overall aim of this visit was to research the Blue Zone and draw conclusions about the Power 9 characteristics by interviewing, observing, and analyzing. Students immersed themselves in the Sardinian culture and brought back information to the local university community and community as a whole. The plan is to implement Blue Zone ideals locally and potentially to implement the Blue Zone Project with the help of the Blue Zone experts.

Conclusions: Visiting the Blue Zone in Sardinia was extremely valuable for nursing students in bringing health promotion ideals back to the community and to patients in a variety of settings. Also, this was an important introduction to qualitative research techniques such as interviewing and qualitative analysis.

Title:

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Keywords:

Health promotion, Healthy lifestyle and Study abroad

References:

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Abstract Summary:

Have you been curious about National Geographic's Blue Zones, five areas across the world where people live much longer than the US? Seventeen nursing students and their professor traveled to Sardinia, Italy, the zone with the most male centenarians, to study up-close the lifestyles that have increased their longevity.

Content Outline:

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I. Introduction

A. Blue Zones, designated by National Geographic, are five areas across the world where people live much longer than most of the United States.

B. Sardinia, Italy was the first designated Blue Zone and has more male centenarians than anywhere on the globe.

C. A group of 17 nursing students, along with their professor, traveled to Sardinia in May 2017 to get an up-close experience with the people, culture, traditions, and lifestyle of Sardinian people.

II. Observations while in Sardinia

A. Diet

1. Very small amount of meat

- a) Protein comes primarily from beans.
- b) Meat is eaten approximately 5 times per month in small portions.
- c) Goat and sheep milk is regularly consumed.
- d) Vegetables and fruits are dietary staples.

2. Red wine

- a) Sardinians drink wine moderately.
- b) Sardinian wine has more artery-scrubbing flavonoids than other wine.

B. Exercise

1. Walking several miles per day

a) Shepherds tend the sheep, which requires a lot of walking in the mountainous regions.

b) People walk rather than ride wherever they go.

C. Relationships

1. Family first

a) Celebrate elders by learning from their wisdom and keeping them in the home.

b) They eat meals together and cherish that time.

2. Develop relationships with others

a) Sardinian people gather with other Sardinian people.

b) They love to laugh together.

3. Develop spiritual relationships

a) Prayer is important.

III. Conclusion

A. Healthy lifestyles include diet, exercise, and relationships.

B. Implementing these concepts would be beneficial for US citizens to prevent disease, increase life expectancy, and increase quality of life.

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Author Summary: Jessica Naber is an Associate Professor at Murray State University in Murray,

Kentucky. She has taught full-time since 2007. She is extremely interested in research related to nursing education, health promotion, and teaching strategies. She frequently has nursing students of all levels working with her on research activities to further their research interests.