

'Walking in their Shoes'

Nursing students' evaluation of an empathy-focused education intervention

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Introduction

Nurses say that the nurturing qualities such as caring, empathy and compassion are important yet a number of reports including the Francis Report (2013) revealed serious failings in patient care. This has been called an empathy enigma (Ward et al. 2012). The main factor in reducing empathy amongst students are, being older, unsupportive environments and exposure to patients in clinical practice (Watson et al. 2000) The biggest factor that seems to prevent empathy loss is education that focuses on awareness and attunement (Campling et al. 2015).

Aim

To test the effect of an empathy-focused education intervention for nursing students

Methods

A cluster randomised controlled trial: *Control group*: lecture on empathy only; *Intervention group*: lecture on empathy AND story walk

Participants: 2nd year nursing students

Data collection: 3 x (baseline, post intervention, follow-up)

Tools: Jefferson Scale of Empathy (JSE); modified Empathy Quotient Scale; Evaluation Questionnaire on the 'story walk'

Data analysis: Between-within ANOVA analysis (ongoing) Thematic analysis of evaluation questionnaire (presented here)

'Story walk' in the USW Simulation Suites

1. A patient story

Experiences of being in hospital; how she felt about the hospital surroundings she encountered

2. A learning resource

Digital audio story clips (some with still images) were created and linked to QR codes, accessible using a smartphone

3. A 'story walk'

QR codes organised and embedded in 9 locations around the Clinical Simulation Suite to follow the steps of the patient journey

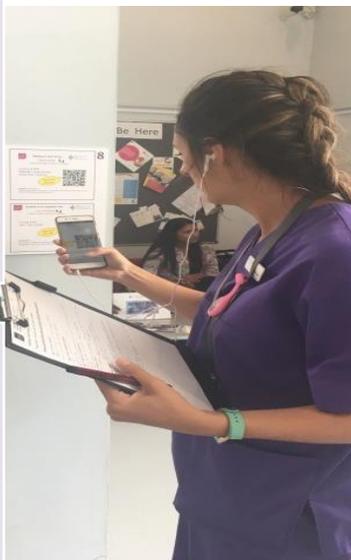


Evaluation of the 'story walk': Thematic analysis



The learning experience

- "Really good exercise helped us understand the importance of empathy"
- "Excellent experience very much enjoyed it! More please!"
- "Very though provoking exercise."
- "Really helps to be put into someone else's shoes and highlights the importance of compassionate patient centred care."



The patient perspective

- "Very interesting to hear story from patients view."
- "you don't always understand what goes through their heads and how they will try to act ok but are really scared inside."
- "A very emotional journey that displays a wide range of emotions and experiences she had and how practitioners can have a huge impact on the journey"
- "Listening to a patient talk about how they feel gives an insight into others."

Self awareness

- "I found it very realistic and gave me a deeper understanding of the thought processes and perceptions of receiving cancer care and surgery for the patient."
- "Interesting to be in the patients shoes through their journey to help us understand the anxieties feelings and emotions that can be experienced"
- "Will definitely make me look at dealing with patients from a different perspective"

Putting things right

- "Small changes can be made to make patients experience less frightful"
- "make small talk at an appropriate level."
- "It shows everyone is human and feels differently but it also shows everyone needs to be treated like a human."
- "Also how as nurses we can change someone's day with a simple friendly chat."

Conclusion

Although the analysis is still ongoing, positive feedback received from our participants suggests that patient stories can be used as an innovative approach for nursing student education on empathy and patient care.

Future directions

The team secured funding from KESS programme for a PhD studentship in partnership with ABUHB. The project focuses on developing and testing a learning resource for nurses using stories from older people and their families.

References

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