BACKGROUND

The American Nurses Association (ANA) called for 2017 to be the “Year of the Healthy Nurse” (American Nurses Association, 2017). As members of the most trusted profession, nurses have the ability to influence their patients to make healthy lifestyle choices (National Nurses United, 2017). The impetus behind the ANA’s campaign is the belief that if all 3.6 million registered nurses in the United States make a commitment to cultivate their personal health and that of their families and communities, strides can be made towards achieving a healthier nation and a healthier world. It behooves nursing researchers to investigate the health promotion habits of nurses and nursing students. This research project is a pilot study assessing the level of health promotion among undergraduate nursing students enrolled at Rhode Island College (RIC) in Providence, RI. The purpose of this pilot study is to conduct a preliminary assessment of the level of health promotion among undergraduate students at Rhode Island College.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Nola Pender’s Health Promotion Model

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the results of this study indicate that the level of health promotion among nursing students at Rhode Island College is not optimal. While students had an informed concept of health as a construct and scored well on spiritual and interpersonal health promotion, scores on the other domains indicate neglect of self-care. Additionally students reported high levels of stress, lack of time, and guilt as barriers to pursuing health while in nursing school. Considering the current status quo of the health of nurses, the stress nurses face, and the risk for compassion fatigue and burnout, the possibility of these students entering the workforce with no positive change in their level of health promotion is concerning. It is imperative that nursing schools foster self-care among their students. Something must be done to ameliorate the status quo of nurse health. As evidence shows, this can be done through the creation of a culture of health and through the infusion of health promotion education into nursing curricula (Yearwood & Riley, 2010; Stark et al., 2012).

Through teaching students about the personal health risks nurses face and their consequences, and by facilitating the translation of clinical concepts of health promotion to personal practice, nursing schools will instill living a healthy lifestyle as a core personal value. The impact on nursing students and the community will undoubtedly be far-reaching. On an individual level, students will feel valued as faculty support their wellbeing. Given the risk for compassion fatigue and burnout, it is imperative that nurses and nursing students understand that care for self is the first step in the care for others. Emphasis of this principle in nursing pedagogy will create healthy nurses who are equipped to serve as positive role models as they encourage their patients to pursue higher levels of health.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the Bob & Anne De Stefano Undergraduate Research Program for generous funding for this project, Dr. Joanne Costello for her steadfast guidance, and Dr. Jane Williams and the rest of the faculty and students of the Rhode Island College School of Nursing for their participation and support of this endeavor.

SELECT REFERENCES


