Incorporating Moral Resilience Into an Undergraduate Nursing Curriculum

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Purpose:

This presentation will address the process of incorporating moral resilience information into the undergraduate nursing curriculum. The program will discuss course changes, strategies and examples for discussions, simulations and experiences related to moral distress, compassion fatigue and moral resilience. Student reflections and comments will also be presented along with future implications and adaptations.

Methods:

Moral distress in nursing is not a new concept and was first discussed by Jameton (1984). He noted that moral distress occurs when one knows the right thing to do, but is unable to perform that action because of constraints. While the issue of moral distress and nursing burnout has been discussed and studied for many years, very little has been done to educate nursing students on this issue. So often students may come in contact with morally distressing events, but do not experience them to the same extent as the nurse caring for the patient. The concept of moral resilience began as a method to assist those experiencing moral distress. A Johns Hopkins symposium on building moral resilience was held in 2016 and the participants noted 4 areas on which to focus: practice, education, research and policy. The symposium concluded that first we must recognize when moral distress occurs and then develop ways to manage these ethically challenging events (Rushton, C, 2017). This presentation will describe a variety of methods whereby moral resilience is incorporated into a baccalaureate program. These methods include ethical dilemma scenarios in simulation throughout the program, discussion boards on morally challenging problems, a mental health first aid program and group discussion of coping methods throughout the program. Barret, Diefenbeck and Mahoney (2013) described compassion fatigue and burnout among 436 undergraduate nursing students. The authors felt that immersion in the clinical setting helped them to deal with some of these feelings. Unfortunately, immersion is not always possible because of restrictive clinical facilities. Therefore, simulated experiences are one way to incorporate these scenarios into the curriculum. Calhoun and Gaba (2017) discuss the idea of whether to let the manikin “die” in simulation and how this may affect the student learner. Although the mortality simulation may increase the students’ anxiety, the question of whether or not the fidelity of the situation helps to improve the students’ overall experience is yet to be determined (Goldberg, et al. 2017). The incorporation of the mental health first aid course has proven positive in improving resilience skills and recognizing crises (Crawford, et al. 2015). Evaluation of these curricular changes took place through student reflections and discussion boards. Student evaluations will be discussed and themes presented.

Results:

Incorporation of these concepts has taken place over the past year at our university and we have queried students on their understanding of moral distress and methods of coping. The idea of resilience was discussed and student responses to the questions of:

“What is moral distress?” “What events may cause moral distress?” “What is moral resilience and how can you best cope with these events?”
In addition, student reflections on simulated experiences are described. The student responses were very interesting. Overall, they had an idea of morally distressing events, but were unaware of coping methods. Many students noted that they were glad these issues were discussed and they liked that ideas were presented from their peers. They had not given much thought to moral distress and really had not thought about how to handle their feelings. Some believed that it was important to not become attached to their patients, yet they weren’t sure how to do that. Students also wrote that they had no idea that moral distress can lead to physical issues and burnout. Some said that it was the first time they thought about the need to take care of themselves and talk about their problems. They had not thought about how to discuss these issues.

Students reflected that they often fantasize about their future as a place where they successfully care for grateful patients and they don’t think about difficulties they may face. A student noted that they hate to think about when they will be on their own with support from faculty and clinical instructors. They thought that hospitals would have systems in place to deal with difficult issues.

Conclusion:

It is important for nursing faculty to discuss morally distressing events with nursing students and provide information and experiences for them to reflect on their moral beliefs. Students need to consider how they will deal with these challenges in the future. The challenges of incorporating this content and the various methods explored will be presented, as well as student responses on reflections and questioning will be discussed. Faculty hope that by making these changes students will be better able to deal with morally distressing events in the workplace.

Title:

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Keywords:

moral distress, moral resilience and undergraduate curriculum

References:


**Abstract Summary:**

The purpose of this presentation will be to address the process of incorporating moral resilience information into an undergraduate nursing curriculum. We will discuss assessment strategies, techniques and experiences to include in an undergraduate program. In addition, we will include challenges and successes with this process.

**Content Outline:**

**Introduction:**

This presentation will address: 1. the process of incorporating moral resilience information into an undergraduate nursing curriculum, 2. assessment techniques, methods of instruction and evaluation of student reflections

**Body:**

**Main Point 1:** Incorporation of Moral Resilience strategies into the curriculum

Supporting Point 1- what courses can incorporate these concepts

Supporting Point 2- what methods of learning are most appropriate

**Main Point 2:** Examples of Moral Resilience discussions, classes

Supporting Point 1- Show examples of discussion boards and group discussions from a variety of classes

Supporting Point 2- Discuss various simulations, events on moral resilience

**Main Point 3:** Discuss student outcomes

Supporting Point 1- Discuss student reflections from courses and simulations

Supporting Point 2- Show themes from student reflections

Supporting Point 3- Discuss changes and adaptations in the curriculum

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