

“Do I Feel Welcome”? Nursing Students' Sense of Belonging While in Clinical Placement

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BACKGROUND

Clinical placements provide an essential learning framework. Nursing students need to feel welcome and wanted not just by the clinical instructor, but also by the nursing staff and leaders. A sense of belonging is an emotional need of the students; namely, to be an essential and important part of the social group they are interacting with and to feel accepted (Radford & Hellyer, 2016).




SETTING

Nursing students in the undergraduate program at the University of Haifa are in eight different clinical sites (internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, emergency medicine, women's health, mental health, community & internship). The clinical placement, 46% of the total bachelor's nursing program, duration is from 12-32 days, including a maximum of 1250 hours and 2,690 hours of content.

GOAL

This case report illustrates the pathway and learning process of an outstanding nursing student through his written journal reflections during his clinical placement.

RESULTS

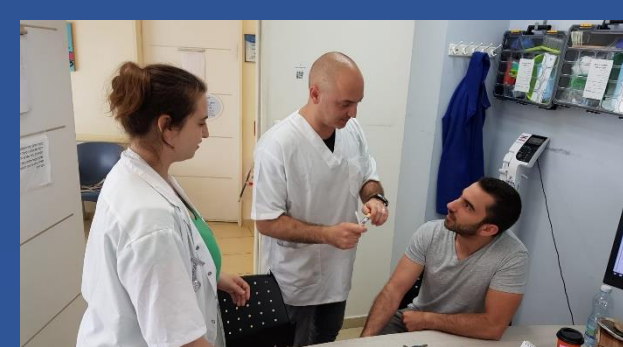
Clinical experience	Student perception	Student challenges	Sense of belonging
1 st clinical experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No prior knowledge & experience ✓ No self-awareness of clinical competencies ✓ No prior experience as a part of a coherent learning group (students in clinical practice together) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Rapid familiarization to the clinical environment & the instructor requirements and style ✓ Recognizes that everyone in the group of 5 students are in the “same place” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Feelings are overwhelming ✓ Appreciates that he must build relationships and framework for learning ✓ Feeling that he "fits in" with the nursing staff 
Non-successful clinical experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Professional standards & norms are not understood or exhibited ✓ Identifies with the patients ✓ Gaps in the learning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Comparison of good models from past experience ✓ Has confidence, relies on himself ✓ Not learning to make clinical decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The environment doesn't spread a sense of belonging ✓ Does not want to belong to the staff ✓ Relates more to the patients 
Successful clinical experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Wants to be involved ✓ The instructor maintains appropriate levels of closeness and distance as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Wants to become independent ✓ Learns the way to "open doors" to opportunities and relationships with staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Doesn't give up on learning outcomes & achievement ✓ My instructor and I become colleagues ✓ I become part of the "Family" in a very short period of time 

CONCLUSIONS

Developing a sense of belonging is an important competency for effective clinical learning.

Factors affecting the sense of belonging in nursing students:

1. Clinical Instructor - Perception of the educational process, mentoring style & professionalism.
2. Nursing staff – Professional organizational culture that facilitating-welcoming relationships with students.
3. Student - Coping strategies with overwhelming & ambiguous situations. Has a success experience & level of expectations



"We knew the department as much as the instructor allowed us to know it"