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Enriching the Global Nursing Immersion Experience Through Peer Mentorship

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Aim

This study aims to determine the importance of peer-to-peer mentorship in global nursing immersion programs. We evaluate the need for peer mentorship through a pilot peer mentor program and surveys to former and current global nursing students at Columbia University, School of Nursing (CUSON).

Background

In 2017, the National League for Nursing (NLN) reported on the importance of expanding nursing education to include global health. In their statement, the NLN proposed that students should be actively engaged in, rather than simply exposed to, varying perspectives in global health to meet the concerns of an increasingly globalized society (NLN, 2017). Currently, many nursing programs are integrating global health immersion into their curriculum (Smit & Tremethick, 2013). The existing framework for global immersion nursing programs typically includes an intensive pre-trip briefing and concludes with a debriefing with faculty and program heads. Several studies have been conducted to quantify the experience of nursing students who go through an international immersion placement to determine potential professional benefits (Curtin et al., 2018, Dohrn et al., 2018, Browne, Fetherston, & Medigovich, 2015, Smit & Tremethick, 2013). A systematic thematic synthesis of student nurses participating in global immersion found benefits including, greater sense of cultural competency, sense of self and overcoming challenges (Browne et. al., 2015). Specific challenges that students face during global immersion experiences include language barriers, miscommunication and appropriately navigating cross-cultural differences (Steen & Zdechlik, 2016). Such issues are commonly discussed with university faculty or host-country preceptors, and are very rarely worked through with the aid of former global immersion students. The lack of formal peer mentoring in global nursing immersion excludes a vast resource and opportunity. Students who have participated in global immersion programs have a unique advantage to lead and help implement changes to improve the experiences of future students.

Peer mentorship is implemented across many academic and professional settings and has been shown to improve academic performance, personal development and foster a culture of responsibility and support (Kramer, Hillman, & Zavala, 2018). Peer mentorship is beneficial to the mentee and mentor. For the mentee, the support of a peer who has experienced similar feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and loneliness when beginning a new endeavour offers a unique and personalized perspective that faculty can often not accommodate (Andersen & Watkins, 2018). For the mentor, being able to share their own experiences and offer advice leads to greater development of leadership skills, critical thinking, confidence and solidifies learning experiences (Andersen & Watkins, 2018). Potential challenges exist for peer mentors and mentees, but the overall benefits far outweigh any difficulties.

Methods

Thus, there is potential for peer involvement to enrich the experience of student nurses during their global integration. Columbia University School of Nursing (CUSON) has developed a rigorous global clinical placement program during which students enroll in a 6-week immersion (Dohrn et al., 2018). In the spring of 2018, CUSON sent 48 nursing students to 11 countries which included the Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jamaica, Jordan, Malawi, Mexico, Spain, India, Italy and the Republic of Georgia. Informal interviews with past global immersion CUSON students identified a need for student mentorship to help integrate new students into global placements. In order to evaluate the potential benefit of peer-to-peer mentorship, this study analyzes student views on future and existing student-led initiatives to complement global immersion programs. The study involves a two-stage program implementation to include peer mentorship in global nursing immersion.

The first stage includes an electronic survey sent to students who have participated in a university-sanctioned global immersion experience within the past two years. This survey includes a range of questions such as, participant demographics (country of origin, religion, language skills), views on pre-departure preparation, peer involvement during pre- and post-departure preparations, as well as in-country contact, and their interest in being a global peer mentor. Results from this first survey are being used to inform the proposal for a structured peer mentorship program piloted with a sample of the subsequent cohort of global immersion students.

We are currently refining this pilot peer mentor program for two global sites in Ethiopia with the guidance of the CUSON Office of Global Initiatives. Students at these sites will have access to peer mentors who will help them navigate before, during and after their global integration and be available to advise on concerns pertaining to global fellowship. Finally, a survey will be sent out post-global integration to students and peer mentors involved in the pilot peer mentorship program. This survey will build upon the initial survey sent to past students by including a review of the pilot program and how it can be further developed.

Results

While our research is ongoing, we expect to find students will look favorably upon increased mentorship. Additionally, we hypothesize that the inclusion of student mentorship will help ease the process of integrating new students into global placements.

Conclusion

We hope to utilize this data to evaluate the implications of peer mentorship and if beneficial, report our findings to be used as a guide for other global nursing programs.

Title:

Enriching the Global Nursing Immersion Experience Through Peer Mentorship

Keywords:

Global Experience, Nursing and Student

References:

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Abstract Summary:

Nursing students gain invaluable experience by participating in global immersion programs. Most programs lack peer-to-peer mentorship, even though greater student involvement can mitigate common issues. This study evaluates the need for peer mentorship through a pilot mentor program, and surveys to former and current global nursing students at Columbia University.

Content Outline:

Problem Statement: Overview of the current status of global immersion programs as part of university-level nursing curriculums. Highlight lack of formal peer-to-peer mentorship in global programs.

Purpose Statement: Review of surveys and pilot peer mentorship program involving former and current global immersion students at Columbia University (CUSON) to analyze student views on incorporating peer mentorship into global immersion programs.

Method: (Two parts)

- Part 1: Electronic survey for students who have participated in a university-sanctioned global immersion experience within the past two years through CUSON. Sample questions:
 - **Pre-country**
 - Why did you choose a global immersion?
 - Did you listen to a student-led global presentation before applying? Please elaborate on positives and negatives?
 - What were your initial expectations and/or hesitations of the global immersion experience?
 - What was involved in your pre-immersion preparation?

- Did you have a peer-prepared informational document shared with you about your site before departure? If so, what was the most helpful component of the document and/or what would you have added?
- Who was involved in your pre-immersion preparation?
- **In-country**
 - Did you feel you had the resources and information necessary to navigate the country?
 - Did you feel supported by faculty at Columbia University School of Nursing and/or faculty in the host-country?
 - Did you rely on any past global students for support while in the host country?
 - What challenges did you face throughout the immersion experience?
 - What did you do in the host country to enrich your experience?
- **Post-country**
 - What personality traits do you possess that you think were integral for a global health immersion?
 - What personality traits do you think other students will need to possess for successful global health immersion?
 - Did you correspond with students who participated in the global experience after you? If so, did you prepare a shared document or meet with them in person?
 - Would you have liked a student mentor while in country? If so, what would be your expectations of this role?
 - Would you be interested in being a global peer mentor for future global integration students?
 - Part 2: Pilot peer mentor program for two immersion sites in Ethiopia (Mekelle & Axum) with guidance from CUSON Office of Global Initiatives. Pilot followed by survey to students who participate in the pilot program. Sample questions:
- **Pre-country**
 - Why did you choose a global immersion?
 - Did you listen to a student-led global presentation before applying? If so, please elaborate on positives and negatives.
 - What were your initial expectations and/or hesitations of the global immersion experience?
 - What was involved in your pre-immersion preparation?
 - Did you have a peer-prepared informational document shared with you about your site before departure? If so, what was the most helpful component of the document and/or what would you have added?
 - Who was involved in your pre-immersion preparation?
 - Did you meet with your peer mentor pre-departure? If you did, in what settings?
 - On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being very helpful), was it helpful to have a peer mentor present pre-departure?
- **In-country**
 - Did you feel you had the resources and information necessary to navigate the country?
 - Did you feel supported by faculty at Columbia University School of Nursing and/or faculty in the host-country?
 - Did you feel supported by your peer mentor? Please elaborate on why you felt either supported or not supported.
 - What challenges did you face throughout your immersion experience? Did you work through any of these with your peer mentor?
 - What did you do in the host country to enrich your experience?

- On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being very helpful), was it helpful to have a peer mentor available during the immersion experience?
 - **Post-country**
 - What personality traits do you possess that you think were integral for a global health immersion?
 - What personality traits do you think other students will need to possess for successful global integration?
 - Did you meet with your peer mentor after returning from your immersion experience? If you did, in what settings?
 - On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being very helpful), was it helpful to have a peer mentor present after returning?
 - Would you be interested in being a global peer mentor for future global integration students?
- Results:** Review of implementing peer mentorship in a global nursing program. Presentation of significant themes found from surveys (parts 1 and 2).
- Discussion:** Analysis of results and trends from surveys. Break down of challenges and limitations to implementing peer mentorship in a global nursing program. Implications for further research and expansion of peer mentorship.

First Primary Presenting Author

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Author Summary: Dawn is a Masters prepared registered nurse who graduated from Columbia University's accelerated program in 2018. Dawn is currently pursuing her doctoral degree as a family nurse practitioner and hopes to specialize in women's health. During her time as a Masters student Dawn was selected to do her nursing integration in Mekelle, Ethiopia. Her time in Ethiopia spurred her interest in global health equity and cross-cultural learning experiences.

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Author Summary: Lynn received her Masters Degree in Nursing from Columbia University School of Nursing in August 2018. As a Master's nursing student, Lynn participated in Columbia University's global integration program through which she spent 6-weeks in Mekelle, Ethiopia. The experience sparked her interest in global health work and nursing education. Lynn is currently enrolled in the Doctor of Nursing Practice

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