Enhancing Empathy amongst Graduate Nursing Students Using Standardized Patients and Theatre

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Introduction

Empathy is a cognitive and affective process that enables the development of concern and profound understanding of the client’s world while the client is present (Santamaría-Garcia et al., 2017). Sigma Nursing Global Nursing Excellence report to the United Nations (Sebo, Sensor, 2018) describes need for empathy as a conduit to peace in local and global communities. The National League of Nursing Vision (2015) for simulation across the curriculum encompasses innovative active learning strategies with empathy-building pedagogy as an important component of health care provider education and improved patient care outcomes. Through human simulation and theatre, nurse practitioner students immersed in an emotional and life-like experience, to enhance cognitive and emotional empathy, the integral components of emotional intelligence (Hostetter & Stewart, 2018).

Abstract

The purpose of this teaching approach was to improve cognitive and emotional empathy regarding adolescent anorexia, depression and suicide within a family context using a clinic simulation and “The Pill,” a professional production adapted to fit health care providers in critical scenes depicting episodes of reaching out for health care. A pre-post design methodology was implemented using a modified Kiessma-Chen Empathy Scale (KCES) (Chen, Plake, 2015) previously validated for use on nursing and pharmacy students in various cultural settings (Everson et al., 2015). Empathy enhancement was used as a conduit to meeting the course objectives to 1) integrate findings from the individual patient within a family, cultural and community context into the treatment plans for adolescents with nutritional disorders and depression 2) identify symptoms and situations that warrant further referral and involvement of the health care team.

Methodology

Fifty-eight doctor (SB) of nursing practice students were immersed in evidence-based simulation activities to promote an understanding of the patient and family dynamics related to adolescent depression and nutritional disorders. The training consisted of a progression of activities, unfolding scenes, and simulation teaching components using the theoretical frameworks from the NNL Jefferies Simulation Theory (Jefferies, 2016) and International Nurses Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL) Standards of Best Practice (INACSL, 2015). Simulation activities progressed as follows: 1) completion anorexia group assignment and KCES Scale 2) participation in a clinical interview of a standardized patient in a simulated exam room environment 3) live classroom broadcast of this clinical interview 4) joint debriefing session with the simulation coordinator and family nurse practitioner facilitator on using empathy in the clinical interview 5) using rapid repeat of the training in an unfolding scenario through the cast of “The Pill” after the theatrical play 6) interdisciplinary debriefing with a coordinator of facilitators (simulation coordinator, family nurse practitioner, psychiatric nurse practitioner, and pharmacist) 7) post-test utilization of the KCES and post-assignment incorporating communication effectiveness and course objectives.

Methodology

Training nursing practitioner students about teen mental health using simulated clinical interview, video live stream and unfolding scene into a live theatre production immersing teens into the patient, family and home environment dramatically improved empathy KCES items, with 75 of 86 student responding theatre simulation. Studies can be designed to encompass individual and conglomerate KCES scores.

Results

Debriefing with the Rutgers faculty and Q and A with the cast of “The Pill” after the theatrical play.

Conclusion

ing.org/teaching-empathy-implementing-theater-pedagogy-in-the-medical-school-curriculum
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References

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Major comments

“Realistic & relatable Eye-opening Comparisons. Enlightening informative insightful”
“Understanding the patient’s history and feelg. Inspiring wound/illness situation”
“The play helped get a view of family dynamic with dealing with mental illness which helped increase empathy”
“Seeing things from family perspective”
“I think they learned to think of the thought of a patient and seeing the family dynamic in real time allows for enhancing empathy”
“Give me the opportunity as a visual learn to observe the verbal nonverbal cues which are essential in mental health”
“The understood the emotional aspect of behavioral health”
“It was interesting to see how different the family member’s perspectives are”
“The emotion felt by the patient is more apparent in clinical theatre education”
“It was helpful listening to a corner situation”
“Makes it easier to understand their struggles”
“Give me a glimpse of the pain”
“The gave me an inside perspective of how mental health affects family”
“Improving active listening and communication and understanding the perspective of the patient”
“We will make me focus more on the family dynamics that may be having effect on the patient’s condition”
“I made aware of how mental health can be so acute and the entire family is affected”
“By more understanding and encompasses whole person and family”
“Was given me confidence in treating behavioral health disorders”
“Seeing and using the tools help to recognize signs”
“Providing a better environment to understand their issues”
“The will help me to modify of the family dynamics of our patients’ home”
“I was shocked and explained a lot that was not able to be seen during the simulation”
“It’s shocking to see how a patient’s environment affects the mental state & psychological wellbeing”
“For opening aid at the time”
“I saw how much family affects the patient and her healing”
“In the context of her family helps explain her condition”
“It made me see things a different way”
“She shows the family how they go through when dealing with a mental crisis”
“Family environment have a major impact on health/mental health impact on issues and should be assessed during visits to see how environment plus interpersonal relationships are doing”

Conclusion

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