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Interprofessional Collaboration Between a US University and Community Partners in Haiti to Improve Health Outcomes

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Purpose:

Globalization has increased awareness of health inequities across population groups in local, national, and global contexts (Labonte, 2012). As a result, inequitable differences can be seen in such areas as health status, outcomes, and access to health services. Further social determinants of health outcomes have been identified at both individual and group levels (Holtz, 2017). At the individual level, factors such as race/ethnicity, gender, employment, discrimination, social class, and income impinge on health. At the group level, social factors that can influence or interact with one's health status include social capital, social networks, and segregation (Holtz, 2017). Accordingly, it is essential to look at these factors affecting populations both within the United States and globally, as our society is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic due to the volume, speed, and diversity of modern migration flows, all of which present a multitude of intercultural challenges for healthcare professionals (Degrie, 2017). This shift in demographic trends has been noted and addressed by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), which has addressed the importance of providing culturally appropriate services for improvement of healthcare delivery (AHRQ, 2019). It is vital that undergraduate nursing students be instructed on the importance of engaging in interprofessional experiential learning opportunities that will enhance their learning and assist them in rendering culturally appropriate healthcare. A study-abroad experience would abundantly meet this goal.

One region where health resources are scarce and a nursing study abroad experience can have a helpful impact on a resource-limited community is North West, Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere (Congressional Research Service, 2019). Haiti is vulnerable to disasters, overcrowded living conditions, insufficient sewage and sanitation systems. It is the scarcity of vital health resources that result in poor health outcomes among the local population.

Methods:

Based on the rising needs of the residents in Haiti's North West, a mission-driven collaborative partnership has emerged. The partnership involves Barry University, a small, Catholic institution in Miami, Florida, and several entities in North West, Haiti, notably, the Archdiocese. In 2014, Barry's Center for Community Service Initiatives, began to build a relationship with the Archdiocese of Miami and the Diocese of Port-de-Paix. The partnership, which focused on the preparation of Haitian teachers and nurses, grew to involve faculty from Barry's College of Nursing and School of Education. This collaboration allowed for continued international service-learning opportunities for the students to become engaged in the community, along with fostering global awareness through a combined international academic and nursing mission partnership (Wilcox, 2012).

Results:

Between 2015 and 2018, students and faculty members from various professional disciplines have collaborated with local Haitian partners rendering care through mobile health clinics throughout North West, Haiti. Students' experiences were expressed through reflective journaling, and shared with faculty.

Conclusion:

Continued future collaborative missions such as this will serve to benefit students, faculty and our international community partners. Nursing students will be better prepared for clinical practice, faculty will have enhanced engaged scholarship/research opportunities, and our community partners will be assisted with achieving improved community health outcomes (NLN, 2017).

Title:

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Keywords:

Interprofessional Collaboration, Nursing Study Abroad and Service-Learning

Abstract Summary:

A Catholic University in Miami, Florida's partnership with several entities in North West, Haiti, create a unique and memorable Nursing Study Abroad collaboration experience for undergraduate nursing students, faculty, and international community partners. This collaboration allowed for international service-learning opportunities and fostered global awareness among student participants.

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Author Summary: Dr. Mureen Shaw has presented her research at several professional conferences, both nationally in the United States, and internationally with Sigma Theta Tau's International Research Congress in Puerto Rico and Calgary, Canada. Her area of interests includes global scholarship and experiential learning with study abroad immersion experiences. She enjoys interdisciplinary collaboration and is pleased to share her work on service-learning, research scholarship and international travel with like-minded colleagues at Sigma's International Research Congress.