Constructing the Role of Global Health Nursing

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Ethical Foundations

- Based upon Crigger’s (2007) framework for a just and viable global ethic with the following five qualities:
  1. Inclusion and balance—all voices heard in decision-making processes including those who may feel powerless and marginalized; an interprofessional approach important
  2. Balance the needs of the individual and the community – do not deny the social and cultural context by placing primary importance on autonomy
  3. Use of reflexivity—facilitates a realistic understanding of others as we see their perspective and promotes critical reflection; allows us to ask ourselves, “is what I am doing promoting more good than harm?”
  4. Position business practices and technological advances in positions to benefit all rather than exploitation
  5. Open to a variety of approaches to human rights such as the theory of human flourishing from Nussbaum (1998) with 10 ‘cent’ characteristics of global health

Global Health Nursing Construction

The role of the global health nurse is constructed from theoretical perspectives, ethical foundations, nursing roles and salient characteristics leading to the following definition of global health nursing:

Individual and/or population-centered care addressing social determinants of health with a spirit of cultural humility, deliberation, and reflection in true partnership with communities and other healthcare providers (Upvall & Leffers, 2014, p. 21)

Characteristics of Global Health Nursing

- Maintains a community perspective—recognizing that individuals do not live in isolation even with technology
- Promotes interprofessional practice—working with multiple healthcare providers and other professionals
- Focuses on building partnerships through: mutual trust and respect, communication, shared vision, commitment, and sustainability

Theoretical Foundations of Practice Leading to Sustainability

The practice of global health nursing has its foundations in the work of Jean Baker Miller’s Relational-cultural theory (1991): we grow in, through, and toward relationship

Four central principles:
1. Mutuality—equivalent to reciprocity in relationships
2. Relational authenticity— the ability to disclose your true feelings without defensiveness.
3. Mutual empathy—emotional connectedness, a capacity to take in and contain the feelings of another person; a transformative process of connection and disconnection, recognizing that there will be failures in mutual empathy
4. Relational awareness is going through the process of connection and disconnection. Relational connection manifested by all partners feeling a greater sense of zest or energy, feeling more able to act in the world, having a more accurate picture of the self as well as the other person, feeling a greater sense of self-worth, and feeling connection and a greater motivation to connect with others

Roles Mediating the Definition of Global Health Nursing

Three major roles described by Merry (2012):

- Advocacy: the need to raise awareness especially to social determinants of health, issues of poverty, human rights and their violations, clean water and all sustainable development goals including those related to the environment; requires the global health nurse to participate in policy development at all levels, local, national and international
- Alleviating suffering: through the delivery of primary health care and health promotion activities, prevention of disease and supporting clients and communities through lifespan changes (birth, childrearing, dying)
- Capacity building: to benefit all nurses, everywhere; includes increasing educational and leadership opportunities, promoting a positive public perception of nursing to attract new nurses into the profession, confronting working conditions including staffing and material resources

Encompasses multiple roles in addition to those roles described by Merry (2012) and these additional roles of clinician, educator, researcher may be overlapping