Caring is a central premise to the nursing profession; however, there is little research on this phenomenon of the best methods to train nursing students on how to address the concept of caring in
nursing and expand their own caring abilities. Watson’s Theory of Caring in Nursing (Watson, 2006) was used as the background for this investigation, through measurement of ten Carative Factors to measure how nurses express caring when interacting with those under their care (Nelson & Watson, 2012) as measured on the Caring Factors Survey-Care Provider Version (Johnson, n.d.)

**Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to examine the differences between didactic only versus didactic plus immersion experience on the self-reported caring perceptions of undergraduate nursing students pertaining to caring for members of vulnerable populations.

**Method**

Retrospective analysis was conducted on students enrolled in an elective course in Caring for Vulnerable Populations. Students were allowed to elect the course alone or to elect to participate in the didactic course plus an immersion experience, working with vulnerable individuals along the Texas-Mexico border. Caring Factors Survey-Care Provider Version (Johnson, n.d.) surveys were collected prior to entry into the course, upon completion of the didactic portion, and again upon completion of the immersion experience. These surveys measure self-reported expression of the Carative Factors (Nelson & Watson, 2012) on a seven-point Likert scale.

Comparison of overall mean caring factor scores for each group was conducted utilizing one way ANOVA between groups of students participating in didactic only versus those participating in didactic plus immersion. Post-hoc analysis to determine if specific caring factors were impacted, repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

**Results**

Overall caring factors mean scores showed significant increase from pre-intervention to post-immersion for the group participating in the didactic plus immersion experience. No significant increase in caring factors was discovered in the group completing the didactic only. Specific areas of increase were teamwork and caring for spiritual and emotional needs of patients.

**Conclusion**

Didactic plus immersion experiences had a significant increase in self-reported caring factors for undergraduate nursing students.

