

**Title:**

Expanding Nursing Students' Sense of Professionalism by an International Clinical Experience

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**Session Title:**

Immersion Experience

**Slot:**

A 03: Friday, April 8, 2016: 10:45 AM-12:00 PM

**Scheduled Time:**

11:25 AM

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**Keywords:**

Immersion experience, Professional growth and Undergraduate nursing students

**References:**

Asenso, B., Reimer-Kirkland, S. & Astle, B. (2013). In real time: Exploring nursing students' learning during an international experience. *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship*, 10(1), 227-236. Diesel, H., Ercole, P. & Taliaferro, D. (2013). Changing knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs via an immersion experience. *International Journal of Human Caring*, 17(1), 71- 78. Harrowing, J.N., Gregory, D.M., O'Sullivan, P.S., Lee, B. & Doolittle, L. (2012). A critical analysis of undergraduate nursing students cultural immersion experiences. *Internal Nursing Review*, 59, 494-501.

**Abstract Summary:**

Findings from a qualitative study of senior nursing students immersion experiences during an international senior capstone clinical will be presented. The impact of the trip on their cultural awareness, and personal and professional development will be discussed.

**Learning Activity:**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE
The learner will be able to discuss three fundamental themes related to the findings of this qualitative study.	The findings from this study will be described in detail. The overarching theme and three categorical themes will be substantiated with quotes from the participants.
The learner will be able to recognize the long-term impact an international nursing experience may have on students personally and professionally.	Personal and professional growth will be explored from the experience as a student to their working lives 2-3 years post their international immersion experience.

**Abstract Text:**

**Background/Significance:** Clinical experiences in a foreign country provide nursing students with an immersion experience that fosters cultural awareness and personal and professional development. The purpose of this longitudinal qualitative study was to determine what impact an international clinical experience had on senior nursing students' personal lives and their sense of commitment to the profession.

**Methods:** Nursing students at a small liberal arts college, who traveled to Kenya or Peru for a 2-week preceptorship as part of their final clinical requirements, were recruited to participate in this study.

Twenty-five students agreed to participate and gave informed consent. Students were interviewed prior to departure, 1 month after returning, and 2 years later. The interview questions explored student expectations for the trip, awareness of the culture of the country they visited, personal experiences on the trip, and whether/how they felt they had changed personally and professionally. Individual interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed by content analysis.

**Results:** The students described the trips as “life-changing,” which was the core theme that emerged. Three subthemes were “making a difference,” “being challenged,” and “discovering self.” The changes that the participants related one month after their return were sustained 2 years later. The students felt more open-minded, could empathize with their patients, and were more culturally sensitive than other nurses they worked with. These changes contributed to their sense of professionalism on both a local and a global scale. Other positive outcomes of international travel were enhanced interpersonal and communication skills and the ability to overcome obstacles such as language barriers and cultural differences.

**Conclusions:** Students reported that they were “forever changed” by their international travel experiences, resulting in a more culturally competent and open-minded approach in their nursing practice. Their sense of professional commitment was enhanced. These outcomes, which have been sustainable over 2 years, reinforce the importance of providing students with opportunities for global experiences and validate the time, effort, and money spent to organize and provide these experiences in nursing programs.