Don’t Take Away My Spark: A Humane Approach In Nursing Education

Mary Hermann, RN, Ed.D
Anastasia Ness, RN, MSN, CPNP
Barbara Jones, RN, Ph.D
Gwynedd Mercy University
Gwynedd Valley, PA
United States of America
Objectives: The participants will be able to:

- Analyze nursing curriculum for its’ capacity to prepare competent, humanistic, globally educated professional nurses.
- Construct a humane nursing curriculum that intentionally includes caring identity formation and affective development of nursing students.

I, Mary Hermann and I, Anastasia Ness, the planners and presenters have no real or perceived vested interest related to this presentation.

The following presentation includes original content from the presenter and content from other sources (cited in slide).
• What are student nurses’ perceptions of their nursing curriculum?

• What are the factors that impact nursing curriculum development?

• Why is having a humane approach important in nursing curriculum?

• Why is having a humane approach important in 21st century nursing?
What approaches in curriculum development create significant learning to sustain the spark and joy that students bring to nursing education?
Can each of you recall a time where focusing solely on protocols, documentation, new technology, short staffing, pathophysiology, or pharmacological treatment has interfered with the comfort and happiness of a patient?

Example: “As a new nurse working on night shift, I was instructed to start performing patients’ bed baths at 4 AM. Day shift had complained that they are far too busy with laboratory studies and consultations to perform them after breakfast. After about a week of switching the schedule, I realized that although I was following the new protocol on my floor, I was disrupting my patient’s sleep and subsequent time to heal. This is the type of care that is not focused on patient’s needs. As a new nurse I was afraid to speak out about this. Some older nurses didn’t really seem to care.”

Why aren’t nurses noticing the major flaw seen in this example?

Is nursing supposed to be this task driven?
Qualitative Phenomenological Study

• Paul Colaizzi: “Lived Experience”

• Purpose:
  1) To assess the meaning of the “Body, Soul & Spirit: The Humanities in Nursing” course for 31 Associate Degree nursing students.
  2) To consider curriculum revision based on study findings.
Lazenby (2011): Human aspects of care can be diminished with a primary focus on evidence-based practice.

Wilby (2011): Creative, qualitative caring is not the priority due to other nursing expectations.

Watson (2012): Urges nursing educators to reorient the curriculum; discusses what truly means to care for a human being.

Valiga (2012): Advocates for strengthening the affective development of the nursing student.
Course Description

• This course examines the complex challenge or reality of coping with illness and/or maintaining health on the person and family.

• Selected humanities modalities such as short stories, film and art will be employed to cultivate a deeper understanding of the complicated nature of the human condition and the meaning of the human response.

• Critical thinking, creativity and empathetic skill development will be emphasized.
Rationales for Humanities Activities

• Humanities activities cause students to draw upon their own experience and identify as a human being; this can facilitate a synthesis within the intellect promoting “big picture” thinking.

• Fong (2014) suggests learning activities that arouse a sense of human connection.
Sample Themes in the Course

- Comfort
- Resilience
- Flourishing
- Human Dignity
- Suffering
- Strength
- Coping
1.) Short Story
“Anthropologist on Mars” by Oliver Sacks

• Describe an insight that you gained from reading this short story, that may enhance your ability in interacting with a person with autism spectrum disorder as a person and nursing professional.
2.) Sculpture

“The Spirit of American Youth: Rising from the Waves” by Donald De Lue

• Why do you think the sculptor chose to carve the statue of the World War II soldier as he did?

• What qualities of the soldier are demonstrated by viewing the sculpture?

• What emotions are generated by viewing the sculpture?
3.) Music
“I Dreamed A Dream” Les Miserables

- How does disappointment make us feel?
- What are some of the ways that we have dealt with our disappointment?
- How do we support others in dealing with disappointment?
- As a professional nurse, how might we support our patient in dealing with disappointment?
4.) Poetry

“The Mask, I Am Human, and I Still Rise” by Maya Angelou:

• When you hear the words "respect human dignity", what does that mean to you?

• What are some of the themes or messages that come to you from listening to these poems?

• As a professional nurse, what does it mean to "respect the human dignity" of your patient?
Methodology of the Study

1) Pre-Course Survey Topics: Student motivation for taking the course, understanding of a humanities modality and its’ connection to becoming a better thinker, development of empathy, creativity of the nurse. (30 SURVEYS)

2) Post-Course Survey: same questions were asked. (29 surveys returned total)

3) Focus-Group Discussions: Took place five months after course completion investigating the long term impact that the course provided to their professional development. (Seven students participated)
Demographics of the Sample:

• Gender:
  – Female: 27
  – Male: 3

• Mean Age: 27.8 years

• Other college degree: No (19), Yes (7) 2 year

• Ethnic Background:
  – Asian (2), Black (4), Hispanic (1), Indian (2), Jamaican (1), White (16).
Data Analysis

• Involved extracting significant statements from the student surveys and focus group discussions to identify major themes.
Major Study Findings from Pre-Course Survey

• **Practical motivation:** “I needed an extra course to be a full-time student”.

• **Unsure of the meaning of a humanities modality:** “Not sure what this means”.

• **Superficial or unclear understanding of the value of the humanities:** “I think it will help to better treat the patient”.

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Major Study Findings From Post Course Surveys

• An understanding of a humanities modality: “Learn more about the human condition from different perspectives”, “Useful in giving us a wider view of the world”.

• New awakened personal identify as a person and nurse: “Looking deeper than the hand-off report you just received”, “Being respectful, nonjudgmental and unbiased towards others”.

• A more in depth, non-judgmental understanding of a patient experience: “Looking at a patient through a three-dimensional lens”.
Major Study Findings from Focus Group Discussions

• The course provided an appreciation of “why I became a nurse”: “Nursing care should not be task driven….should involve creativity….need to include more empathy activities in curriculum”

• Classroom environment described: “therapeutic”

• The course shed light onto students’ current places of employment: “I hear nurses say, “the shift hasn’t even started and I’m ready to go home”, which is very discouraging…we need to focus on connecting with the patients”
Summary of Major Findings Themes:

• Becoming a better critical thinker, deeper and more flexible thinker: “More in tune with patients”, “Looking beyond outward appearances”, “One size does not fit all”.

• Nursing as a true relationship and not just tasks to be completed: “What color are the patient’s eyes?”, “What it really means to be nonjudgmental”.
Summary of Major Findings Themes:

• Becoming a nurse involves sustaining inspiration: “Reading stories, looking at films, reflecting on themes, listening to other students, feeling calm and not stressed all brought me back to why I wanted to be a nurse in the first place… it felt like a fire inside of me”.

• Do not leave humanities learning activities up to a “random opportunity”: “Depending on the clinical instructor, sometimes we would discuss grief or comfort, but sometimes we wouldn’t if we didn’t have time”, “Humanities based courses are weighed so little as compared to science based courses”.
Limitations of the Study

- Small sample sizes
- Self-reporting nature of surveys
- Participants providing socially desirable responses
- Focus group taking place five months after course completion thus longer term impact not assessed
Implications/Recommendations of the Study

• Strengthen affective development opportunities for students (classroom & clinical experiences) rather than “random opportunities”.

• Implement strategies for intentional integration of humanities modalities; support personal & professional identify formation.

• Integrate methods to create a therapeutic climate to support the learning of nursing students.
Conclusion

• It is imperative that nursing academia prioritizes the humanities in the undergraduate education and values a curriculum that brings back the spark & joy of the nursing student.
FLOURISHING
• Thank you for listening.
• We hope that you enjoyed the presentation.
• Questions?