Do Educational Experiences With Culture Diversity Make a Difference in Patient Care?

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OBJECTIVES

• Describe an educational program that may be used to help students reduce health disparities.

• Identify outcomes that may be used to assess the usefulness of a diversity program.

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BACKGROUND

• Improving the quality of care to diverse populations is an important national and international concern for nursing and the total health care system.

• Numerous reports reveal that health care disparities and inequalities continue to persist globally. In the United States, health disparities have significant economic impacts estimated in trillions of dollars. Schoeni, Dow, Miller, and Pamuk (2011) suggest eliminating health disparities for people with less than a college education in the US would have a $1.02 trillion economic value.

• Beyond the financial considerations, eliminating health disparities builds health equity to allow all people access to better health care and healthier lives.

THE CHALLENGE

• Cultural diversity is extremely complex with numerous underlying facets.

• Social determinants, the conditions in which people live, work, play, worship, learn, are part of cultural diversity and are paramount in decreasing health disparities.

• Poverty: lack of access to health care facilities, education, housing; neighborhood conditions; exposure to violence; and other determinants are increasingly recognized to impact healthcare.

THE PROJECT

• Thirty-one advanced practice registered nursing (NP) students participated in the project from 2014-2016.

• Interventions included:
  ✓ An online learning module designed to increase cultural competent patient centered care https://www.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/
  ✓ Working with interpreters, assessing populations, and planning services.
  ✓ A three-hour credit course analyzing major social determinants that affect health and their consequences.
  ✓ Two semesters of clinical experiences in selected underserved areas.

RESULTS

• Outcomes that were measured include students’ knowledge of culturally diverse populations, faculty evaluations of students’ performance, students’ commitment to work in underserved areas, and employment in underserved areas after graduation.

• Qualitative data revealed an increased student awareness of different cultures, knowledge that health has many different meanings to different individuals, importance of listening to patient stories and perceptions, gaining a better picture of the patient’s health and concerns to engage in best possible treatment and outcomes

• Quantitative data – 100% completed the online module; 100% completed the courses; 100% completed the two semesters of clinical experiences in underserved areas; 100% signed commitments to practice in underserved areas; 51.6% (16) have graduated and are employed in underserved areas in the state and nation.

IMPLICATIONS

• Results offer educators an example of cultural diversity learning experiences and the impact on advanced practice nurses that extend to NP employment after graduation.