Advancing Undergraduate Nursing Students’ Knowledge and Sensitivity to Culture and Diversity

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ABSTRACT

Nurses have long identified that culture and diversity are important for clinical practice. A review of the content of an undergraduate nursing program informed faculty members from a metropolitan university in the Dallas Fort Worth area that topics of culture and diversity were not scaffolded to provide an adequate foundation for ongoing student learning. Undergraduate students enrolled represented great diversity, about a third of each class included either minority or international students. An important first step involved creating awareness about one’s personal perspectives and sensitivity to personal bias and prejudice.

METHODS

A Paper Chain learning activity was selected as the organizing learning activity. Faculty volunteers were identified and participated in a 60-minute diversity training activity. A pre-work assignment to view a video and complete a brief reading offered junior 1 students ways to think about their personal responses before the activity day. The student group was divided into 10 teams with 6-member each. Two teams were assigned to a classroom. Teams received a bag of supplies with instructions. They had 20 minutes to work together and create a paper chain. They were told that the team with the best chain would win a prize.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learning Objectives:
- Students will examine personal beliefs, values, biases and prejudices.
- Students personal self-awareness about the ways privilege and oppression operate in society will be enhanced.
- Students awareness that other’s experiences of privilege and oppression may differ from theirs.

An interdisiciplinary committee (i.e., nursing, physical therapy, student life, psychologist) was formed and met to the development of an cultural emphasis to over four semesters for nursing students. The intent was to identify active learning opportunities that offered opportunities to advanced knowledge and sensitivity. The vision is to alter student engagement with one another on campus and better prepare them for clinical practice in workplace environments.

Figure 1: Privileged

At the final debriefing, two facilitators spent about 30 minutes with students as they shared personal stories about daily struggles with culture and diversity.

Figure 2: Oppressed

At the end of the experience, faculty facilitators assisted small classroom groups to debrief by asking questions to assist understandings and process emotions and experiences. Example questions: "What was this experience like for your?" "How did you feel?" "did anyone wonder what was happening in the other space?" "How did you feel toward the facilitators?" At the end of debriefing sessions, groups chose a spokesperson to share themes from the experience with the larger class group.

DEBRIEFING

At the end of the experience, faculty facilitators assisted small classroom groups to debrief by asking questions to assist understandings and process emotions and experiences. Example questions: "What was this experience like for you?" "How did you feel?" "What impact did this experience have on your perspectives?" or "What impact did this experience have on your understanding of diversity?"

CONCLUSIONS

Overall this proved to be a beneficial way to introduce beginning nursing students to the concept of diversity. Identifying that different exist in student values and beliefs can help them be more sensitive in their work together and with patients. Informing students of the length of the experience and what to expect beforehand could be good adjustments to future experiences. Also, including some content especially relevant to nurses and culture might be useful.