

## Nursing Education Research Conference 2018 (NERC18)

### Undergraduate Student Nurses' Perceptions of Art Therapy in Mental Health Settings

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#### Abstract

**Background:** In today's fast paced world of healthcare service delivery learning effective communication skills are imperative for student nurses. These skills and techniques are emphasized within mental health courses as student nurse interactions are viewed as key interventions to foster patient coping, stabilization, and recovery. However, patients with mental illness are not an easy population to communicate with as related to their stress levels and disease processes. This situation is magnified for student nurses who are still learning ways to dialogue with mental health patients and possibly being afraid of saying the wrong thing and further upsetting the patient. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of undergraduate (baccalaureate) student nurses regarding the use of art therapy to promote a therapeutic relationship and communication with mental health patients. A review of the literature revealed a lack of research on this topic.

**Method:** This was a qualitative study using principles of thematic analysis following the process of using focus group interviews for analysis. In this study art therapy is defined as coloring or drawing. Art therapy was rendered in each clinical setting in the form of crayons and paper or coloring books. In some settings student nurses initiated the art therapy while in other settings it was conducted under the direction of an art therapist who primarily provided suggestions for content. The content of the drawings were not included in this analysis. Student nurses and mental health patients actively participated in coloring together on a one-to-one basis in an open, observed area such as in the dining room or in a group setting; all in a locked and secured clinical unit.

**Results:** Major themes found in the study included: student nurses' initial experiences with mental health patients, student nurses' observations of mental health patients, and student nurses' and mental health patients' responses to art therapy. Of significance, student nurses experienced a sense of professional growth with communication skills when using art therapy with mental health patients. Additionally, students reported that art therapy provided mental health patients with a sense of empowerment and improved self-esteem; a trusting relationship was established.

**Conclusions:** The intentional use of art therapy should be integrated into undergraduate nursing education. Further research should be conducted to determine if art therapy is useful with students in clinical settings other than that of mental health. In addition, innovations using art therapy in nursing education and clinical practice should be studied.

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#### Title:

Undergraduate Student Nurses' Perceptions of Art Therapy in Mental Health Settings

#### Keywords:

Art therapy in mental health settings, Qualitative Research and Therapeutic communication and student nurses

#### References:

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### **Abstract Summary:**

This presentation will describe undergraduate student nurses' perceptions of art therapy in mental health settings. The impact of art therapy upon therapeutic communication processes with mental health patients and subsequent professional growth of student nurses is emphasized. Applications of this study for clinical practice, nursing education and research are offered.

### **Content Outline:**

## **Student Nurses' Perceptions of Art Therapy in Mental Health Settings**

### **Content Outline**

1. Mental health patients and usage of art therapy in the clinical setting-brief review of the literature.
1. Undergraduate student nurses communication with mental health patients in the clinical setting; challenges and opportunities for professional growth.
1. Purpose of the Study and Research Question
  1. Methodology
  2. Data Analysis
  3. Limitations of the Study
1. Findings (3 key themes) (**Presentation Objectives 1 & 2**)
  1. Student nurses' initial experiences with mental health patients
  2. Student nurses' observations of mental health patients
  3. Student nurses' and mental health patients' responses to art therapy
1. Discussion
  1. Applications for nursing education, clinical practice, and nursing research (**Presentation Objective 3**)
1. Conclusion
2. Acknowledgements

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**Professional Experience:** I have over 25 years of teaching experience in nursing. I have served as a Course Leader for many years. Currently I serve as Course Leader for Chamberlain College of Nursing for their graduate healthcare policy track and their graduate capstone course.

**Author Summary:** Dr. Rice has served as an RN for 25 years as clinician, author, international speaker, and nurse educator. She has published 5 home care textbooks as well as authored numerous articles, etc. She has recently completed a STTI grant funded research study and recently presented the findings at the STTI in Ireland (2017) and at the Watson Conference in Italy (2017). Dr. Rice is currently an online graduate faculty and Course Leader for Chamberlain University.