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A Community Engaged Learning Pedagogical Approach to Population Health and Primary Prevention

Tracy J. Perron, PhD, RN, CNE, CSN

Department of Nursing, The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ, USA

Tami L. Jakubowski, DNP, CPNP-PC, CSN

Frances M. Maguire School of Nursing and Health Professions, Gwynedd Mercy University, Furlong, PA, USA

With the shift in healthcare to primary care, health promotion and population health, it is important for nursing students to engage in a variety of learning venues. The need for collaborative practices in the community is an ever increasing necessity. Community Engagement is a signature experience for the students at The College of New Jersey. This opportunity allows students to apply their additional knowledge and enhanced skills to address a community need, as well as develop their own civic skills and clinical skills through an experiential learning opportunity. Projects are guided by the learning objectives of the course as well as the needs of the community. Students in their sophomore year spend 25 hours participating in community engagement in a variety of setting building on their core content in nursing health assessment, nutrition and lifespan classes. This type of community based learning allows the students to care for populations in the community setting that they would typically see in the outpatient settings with chronic conditions, develop patient communication skills with various age groups, practice health promotion and disease prevention and increase their awareness for the relevant health issues of rural and underserved communities.

Students projects varied, some students chose to organize a healthy walking club and/or a gym buddy for students with differing abilities on the college campus. Another group was engaged in the local public school system where childhood obesity and Type II diabetes is prevalent, in a program known as SNACK (Smart Nutrition and Collaboration for Kids). The students participated in recess get up and move activities twice a week. Students also went to TASK (the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen) where they served meals, taught health lessons, performed screenings, and assisted in teaching various topics to students who were earning their GED. Undergraduates provided breastfeeding and parenting classes to teen mothers at Project Teach, a comprehensive educational program which provides pregnant and parenting adolescents with the skills needed to create a positive life for themselves and their children. Finally the students participated with Dawn of Hope Project whose program is designed to provide practical instruction to girls in critical areas such as character development, building self-esteem, embracing their identity, life skills, health and wellness. The students provided educational information sessions on various topics related to health and wellness as well as self-esteem.

Students as well as faculty benefit from this type of educational/clinical setting. Students acquire the ability to apply what they have learned in “the real world”, improved social responsibility and citizenship skills, connections with professionals and community members allow for learning and career opportunities and improve assessment and clinical skills. Faculty benefit from new opportunities for research and publication via new relationships between faculty and community partners and it allows networking opportunities with engaged faculty in other disciplines or institutions as well as other healthcare professionals.

Title:

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Keywords:

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Abstract Summary:

With the shift in healthcare to health promotion and population health it is important for nursing students to engage in a variety of learning venues. The need for collaborative practices in the community is an increasing necessity. Community Engagement is a signature experience for the students of the nursing program.

Content Outline:

With the shift in healthcare to primary care, health promotion and population health, it is important for nursing students to engage in a variety of learning venues. The need for collaborative practices in the community is an ever increasing necessity. Community Engagement is a signature experience for the students at The College of New Jersey. Through various community partnerships students are able to participate in health education, health screenings, health promotion activities such as flu clinics and immunization clinics. This opportunity allows students to apply their additional knowledge and enhanced skills to address a community need, as well as develop their own civic skills and clinical skills through an experiential learning opportunity. Projects are guided by the learning objectives of the nursing course as well as the needs of the community.

First Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author

Tracy J. Perron, PhD, RN, CNE, CSN
The College of New Jersey
Department of Nursing
Assistant Professor

Ewing NJ
USA

Professional Experience: THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, School of Nursing, Ewing, NJ Assistant Professor September 2014 – Present School Nurse Program Coordinator Rutgers University September 2015 – Present School Nurse Program Coordinator Kean University 2013-2014 Graduate Program Coordinator Kean University 2013-2014 RUTGERS THE STATE UNIVERSITY, College of Nursing, Newark, NJ Clinical Faculty 2001-2011 School Nurse Program Coordinator/Advisor Rutgers University 2007-2011 Adjunct faculty Rutgers University 2011-2014 NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR NURSING AMBASSADOR, Kean University 2012-2014 SIGMA THETA TAU INTERNATIONAL Educational Task Force Member 2013-present NURSE OF THE FUTURE GAP ANALYSIS COMPETENCIES Task Force Member 2013-2015 Johnson & Johnson School Nurse Fellow, 2015 National League for Nursing, Certified Nurse Educator, 2012 Recipient of the Robert Wood Johnson Scholarship, the purpose of this scholarship was for the pursuit of a doctorate with a focus in nurse education preparation, 2009. Certified School Nurse, Board of Education State of New Jersey, 2003

Author Summary: I have been a registered nurse for over 25 years and I have over 16 years teaching experience at a university. I have extensive experience public speaking in various venues including national conferences. An assistant professor at The College of New Jersey, certified school nurse, a certified nurse educator and a J & J School Nurse Fellow.

Second Secondary Presenting Author

Corresponding Secondary Presenting Author

Tami L. Jakubowski, DNP, CPNP-PC, CSN
Gwynedd Mercy University
Frances M. Maguire School of Nursing and Health Professions
Associate Professor
Furlong PA
USA

Professional Experience: GWYNEDD MERCY UNIVERSITY, Gwynedd Valley, Pennsylvania 2015-present Associate Professor THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, Ewing, New Jersey 2008-2015 Assistant Professor, Pediatric Course Leader (BSN), Pediatric Primary Care (MSN) THOMAS JEFFERSON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF NURSING, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 2008 Maternity Clinical Instructor SOUTHAMPTON PEDIATRICS, Southampton, Pennsylvania 2008-present Pediatric Nurse Practitioner ABINGTON PEDIATRIC ASSOCIATES, Abington, Pennsylvania 2004-2007 Pediatric Nurse Practitioner CHILDREN'S SURGICAL ASSOCIATES, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania & Princeton, New Jersey 2002-2004 Pediatric Nurse Practitioner-General Surgery, Ophthalmology, Otolaryngology, Urology GWYNEDD MERCY COLLEGE, Gwynedd Valley, Pennsylvania 2002 Pediatric Clinical Instructor NORTH WILLOW GROVE PEDIATRICS, Willow Grove, Pennsylvania 1993-2001 Pediatric Nurse Practitioner VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION OF EASTERN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, Willow Grove, Pennsylvania 1992-1993 Pediatric Nurse Practitioner CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF PHILADELPHIA, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 1987-1994 Registered Nurse

Author Summary: Tami L. Jakubowski is an Associate Professor at Gwynedd Mercy University. She has over 20 years of experience as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. Tami is a certified school nurse in Pennsylvania, and is a Johnson & Johnson School Nurse Fellow.