Students’ Cultural Beliefs Towards Mental Health
Implications for Learning and Teaching

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STTI: Nursing Education Research Conference
April 20, 2018
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No conflict of interest to disclose. No financial or commercial support provided to authors.
Learning Objectives

To:

• understand how nursing students’ culture influences their understanding of mental health;
• identify factors that affect students’ learning about mental health nursing and mental health problems;
• identify implications for education and provide recommendations for future research.
Why is this important?

• Anecdotal feedback from students
  • “My family thinks my grandmother is a witch and turned her out of the home. I now understand that she is experiencing dementia”.
  • “Mental illness is retribution for sins in a past life/is bad karma”
  • “Mental illness (ADHD) does not exist in my country”
Background

• The beliefs and attitudes held by individuals towards mental health problems vary between cultures (Chambers et al., 2010)
• 49% of the Australian population were born overseas, or have a parent who was born overseas (ABS, 2017)
• 33% of nurses in Australia were born overseas (ABS, 2013)
• One in three undergraduate nursing students are ‘International Students’ (Overseas student enrolments) (ACU, 2018)
Search Strategy

Nursing Students

Student attitudes

Mental Disorders / Mental Health

Culture / Cross cultural differences

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Search Outcomes

- Records identified through database searching \((n = 749)\)
- Records after duplicates removed \((n = 518)\)
- Records screened \((n = 518)\)
- Full-text articles assessed for eligibility \((n = 30)\)
- Studies included in qualitative synthesis \((n = 5)\)
- Records excluded \((n = 487)\)
- Full-text articles excluded, with reasons \((n = 25)\)
Results

• Negative attitudes were common (Bennett & Stennett, 2015)
• Influencing factors – ethnicity and knowing someone with mental health problem (Schafer et al., 2011)
• Intervention (education and clinical placement) may change some attitudes (Bingham & O’Brien, 2017; Chan & Cheng, 2001; Iheanacho et al., 2014)
• Some beliefs appear to be less responsive to intervention
Future Research

• What’s an effective way to teach, when your class has many different cultural backgrounds?
• What effective pedagogy challenges beliefs and attitudes that are culturally determined?
• What approaches to teaching and learning support critical thinking skills for all students regarding mental health?
Hansen, A., McGarry, D., Johnson, A., & Roche, M. *(Under review).* Supporting nursing students to learn about mental health: An integrative literature review. *Nursing Education Today.*
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