Purpose:

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of student nurses attending clinical placement at a primary healthcare setting in regional New South Wales, Australia. Primary healthcare is an essential mode of service across national and international healthcare systems. Due to aging populations and a changing healthcare demographic which includes increasing prevalence of chronic disease and increasing pressures associated with health technology, there is a need to ensure healthcare service delivery is effectively integrated (World Health Organization, 2000). For this reason, it is essential to prepare the student nurse for a healthcare system with changing workforce priorities that are less focused upon acute service delivery as the primary method of healthcare (Chowthi-Williams, Harris, & Curzio, 2010; Keleher, Parker, & Francis, 2010; McKenna, Parry, Kirby, Gilbert, & Griffiths, 2014). By understanding the experiences of student nurses attending clinical placement in the primary healthcare setting, educators and stakeholders will be better informed to put into place strategies to support the student nurse both during clinical placement and during the provision of theoretical content.

Methods:

This study utilized an exploratory qualitative research design through the process of naturalistic enquiry (Lincoln, & Guba, 1985a). Purposive sampling was used to recruit current student nurses, across two separate degrees of study, who attended a clinical placement at a primary healthcare clinic. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the interview transcripts analyzed thematically informed by the work of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2014). Rigor was ensured by the processes of; credibility through the use of established research methods, participants encouraged to be forthright, transcriptions made available to the participant for review to ensure the authenticity of the data; and confirmability through documentation of researcher bias, recognition of the limitations and shortcomings of the research, participant quotation to provide a context to the findings, and investigator triangulation to ensure rigor of themes (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln, & Guba, 1985b).

Results:

The study identified two main themes within the findings.

Theme 1 - Attitudes and perspectives towards PHC. This theme identified that student nurses have a poor attitude towards primary healthcare, and discusses how the student nurse does not regard primary healthcare as proper nursing, or hat it requires basic or no skills. These attitudes were informed by a number of elements including popular media, cultural attitudes and even attitudes of qualified nurse.

Theme 2 - Experience with PHC while on clinical placement. This themes identified that student nurses have a poor understanding of what primary healthcare practices involve, and discussed how the student was unsure of the skills that would be practiced, and unable to contextualize how learning which may have been geared toward acute care settings was transferrable to the primary healthcare setting.

Conclusion:
To support the student nurse in their learning within primary healthcare it is essential to first understand the student perceptions and the experiences they have while on clinical placement within the setting. This allows clinical and academic educators to provide structured learning which better enables the student nurse to practice within a diverse range of settings.

Title:
Experiences and Perspectives of Pre-Registration Student Nurses Toward Primary Healthcare

Keywords:
Primary Healthcare, Qualitative and Student Nurses

References:


Abstract Summary:

An exploratory qualitative study designed to develop understanding of the perspectives students nurses hold towards the primary healthcare setting and how the clinical placement experience influences this

Content Outline:

Primary healthcare is an important element of service delivery in healthcare systems, within both Australia and also internationally. Primary healthcare is an approach to health, which focuses on empowering communities to achieve their essential healthcare needs and is concerned with addressing health disparities of communities or populations (World Health Organization, 1978, 2003). While primary healthcare has always been an essential component of healthcare delivery, due to changing health priorities including; aging populations; increasing prevalence of chronic disease; and healthcare workforce shortages, primary healthcare is undergoing a renewed emphasis (Australian Primary Healthcare Nurses Association, 2017; Health Workforce Australia, 2014). To reflect these changing priorities there is need to better prepare a pre-registration nursing workforce that is ready to work across a broad range of settings, in addition to a nursing workforce who appreciates client experience more broadly than through the episodic nature of hospital based care.

On element which is used to help prepare the student nurse to enter the workforce is clinical placement. For clinical placement to be most effective within nursing curricula clinical placement experiences should be reflective of future workplace practices. Historically, there has been a tendency for Australian university nursing curricula to focus on acute care or hospital based services rather than primary healthcare in the preparation of students for practice (Keleher, Parker, & Francis, 2010). The shift in healthcare towards a more integrated model of health, including a refocus on primary healthcare and primary health services requires nursing education to develop a workforce which is able to provide care for clients across broad healthcare settings outside of the hospital environment. However, in order to reflect the current shift in healthcare delivery from hospital based care to a more integrated model,
institutes providing nurse education face a number of challenges in refocusing their program (McInnes, Peters, Hardy, & Halcomb, 2015). These challenges include addressing the theoretical content needed by the student as well as sourcing the facilities for the clinical placement experience.

To effectively prepare the nursing workforce for a healthcare system with changing priorities, nursing curricula must reflect contemporary and future nursing practice (Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council, 2012). The Australian healthcare system is facing collective pressures from an increasing population, an aging population and increasing use of health technology (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014; Australian Primary Healthcare Nurses Association, 2017; Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). There is a need to ensure the healthcare system is effectively integrated to ensuring continuity of services in light of the changing population demographics (Health Workforce Australia, 2014). Despite the importance of primary healthcare within Australia nurses often feel ill-equipped and unprepared to work within the primary healthcare setting. There also exists negative perceptions towards primary healthcare among the nursing profession, with it sometimes being viewed as more basic form of nursing or even a road to retirement (Australian Primary Healthcare Nurses Association, 2017). It is essential to address these concerns with nursing students during their undergraduate learning to ensure they enter the workplace with an appropriate understanding of the healthcare system.

To equipped students and newly graduate nurses with the knowledge and skills to work in PHC settings it is important to understand the attitudes of the pre-registration student nurse towards the primary healthcare settings and the manner in which this may be informed through the clinical placement experience to ensure teaching and learning is appropriate to the context as well as being student centred. By doing so, theoretical content can be developed to better address attitudes regarding the primary healthcare setting.

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**Author Summary:** Zach has a clinical interest in the areas of paediatric and emergency nursing. He has worked as both an Endorsed Enrolled Nurse and then as a Registered Nurse across a range of fields. His passion is teaching and learning and the adult students experience with learning, and this lead to his completing a Master’s degree in Nursing with a major in teaching and learning. Zach's research interests are within the areas of stigma and taboo

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**Author Summary:** Leah is an Associate Professor of Nursing (Primary Health Care). Leah’s research portfolio is largely focused on risk management within the context of vulnerable populations. Her research interests include women’s health, public health, sexual health and wellbeing, and patient safety. Leah has a range of research methodological experience with expertise in qualitative research. Leah is well published, at both an international and national level particularly for her work on sexual health and wellbeing.

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**Author Summary:** Jane’s current role provides her with the opportunity to enhance the quality of teaching and learning within the School and the University. Jane’s teaching, and research focuses on; health workforce education/leadership; safety and quality in health care health service delivery, skill mix, and functions in health and aged care. Jane’s consultancy activity has included leadership and management development programs, online courses in primary care, reviews of health service delivery and models across diverse settings.