A2.3: Reflective Journaling: Preparation of Graduate Students For Health Care Challenges In the Next Decade

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Presentation Preference: Research Abstract

Abstract Categories:
Thematic Areas: Methods

Abstract:
Introduction: In today’s complex health care delivery system, nurse practitioners are challenged to deliver evidence based care and commit to lifelong learning. Reflection on practice and an awareness of self have been recommended as ways to enhance clinical competence. Reflective journaling can also assist students and professionals to sustain themselves emotionally in their clinical work. Through reflective journaling, students are provided the opportunity to tell their own stories about what it is like to be a student and what it is like to witness patients’ experiences of illness. The overall purpose of this study was to describe what graduate nursing students were coming to know about themselves within the context of a graduate course in the psychiatric mental health nursing which prepares them for the advanced practice role.

Method(s): A descriptive exploratory design was conducted using qualitative methods. Reflective journals of students (n=28) enrolled in NURS.6308 Mental Health Concepts for Advanced Practice Nurses were reviewed for accuracy and completeness. Content analysis was performed to identify prominent themes and patterns regarding the students’ perceptions of what they were coming to know about themselves as they worked in the psychiatric mental health area. Categories were established (emergent coding) after preliminary examination of data by research team. Inter-rater reliability was established and descriptive statistics were used to describe this sample of graduate nursing students.

Results: Four major themes emerged from the data: Becoming Aware, Feeling the Pain, What I Learned, and Personal Growth.

Discussion & Conclusions: The structured reflective journaling experience in this study provided graduate nursing students with the opportunity for retrospective analysis. Students were able to gain a greater sense of self-awareness that enabled them to become more genuine in their interactions with patients. Without the structured reflective journaling assignments, the students would most likely have mastered the course content but might not have been able to engage in this process of increasing awareness of self and others, which is essential for the advanced practice role.
Abstract History:
This abstract has been published or accepted for publication. A publication about findings from this study have been accepted for publication - summer 09

Financial Disclosure:
No, I (or a member of my immediate family) have not received something of value* from or own stock (or stock options) in a commercial company or institution related directly or indirectly to the subject of my presentation.

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