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The Use of Arts-Based Projects in Clinical Education

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Abstract: The purpose of this research roundtable is to explore the use of arts-based pedagogies in the clinical post-conference setting.

Keywords: nursing education, clinical education, arts-based pedagogy

The profession of nursing is considered to be both a science and an art. The science of nursing pertains to the cognitive knowledge required to understand human physiology and technical skills required to safely perform procedures. The art of nursing concerns the interpersonal skills required to view individuals holistically and address psychosocial needs. Due to the increasingly technical and complex nature of the healthcare environment, and the “measurable” nature of patient outcomes, there is a far greater emphasis placed on the teaching and learning of scientific knowledge in nursing education (Bevis, 2000; Parker & Myrick, 2009). The effectiveness of commonly utilized pedagogies aligned with this positivist epistemology, such as didactic lecture, has recently been called into question (Bevis, 2000; Parker & Myrick, 2009; Reiger et al., 2015). For instance, a major finding from the national nursing education study conducted by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching was that there is a lack of effectiveness in the teaching of nursing science, natural sciences, social sciences, technology, and humanities in nursing education (Benner et al., 2010). Furthermore, a number of institutions including the World Health Organization, the National League for Nursing, and the Lancet Commission are recommending reform in health care education. At the same time, various scholars and educators are suggesting that new pedagogical practices are needed in order to educate nurses who will embrace both the science and art of nursing (Reiger et al.).

In response, educators are advocating for an alliance between the arts and nursing subject areas; suggesting that the use of arts-based pedagogies may facilitate student learning and develop competencies essential to the provision of humanistic healthcare (Reiger et al., 2015). Such pedagogies refer to the use of poetry, drama, dance, literature, music, and all other forms of visual art as well as the use of images, symbols, and metaphors (Lawrence, 2008). The use of arts-based pedagogies in nursing education has been explored to some degree, however, it is a relatively small body of research (Aranda et al., 2015; Idczak, 2007; McCaffrey & Purnell, 2007; Webster, 2010; Wikstrom, 2001). In their recent synthesis of this literature, Reiger et al. identified outcomes of arts-based pedagogies in nursing education, some of which include: increased student engagement and enhanced empathy, self and cultural awareness, and observational skills. This work provides insight into the effectiveness of arts-based approaches in nursing education, however, to our knowledge, research has yet to address how such approaches may be incorporated and assessed in the clinical post-conference setting.

Clinical post-conference is a time during the last hour of a patient care experience for students to reflect on learning. Based on the current research, we believe that pedagogies involving arts-based strategies during clinical post-conference could facilitate the development of relationships with patients, enhance empathy, and deepen understanding of patient experiences, while at the same time encourage students to think critically, reflectively, and to enhance the learning of clinical skills (Webster, 2010).

Purpose of Roundtable

We are interested in exploring how nurse educators may incorporate arts-based approaches into the clinical post-conference setting, as well as how to assess and research the effectiveness of using the arts in this context. Therefore, the purpose of this research roundtable is two-fold: 1) To brainstorm how nurse educators may use the arts to facilitate learning in the clinical post-conference setting; 2) To generate ideas for the most appropriate research design as well as a viable method for assessing student learning from arts-based strategies.

Roundtable Activities

In line with the purpose of this research roundtable, activities will include: (1) A brief overview of the literature involving arts-based pedagogies within nursing education; (2) An arts-based activity to facilitate discussion and promote creative brainstorming toward the purpose of designing arts-based approaches and research to assess student learning.

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