Strand 1C: Empathy and Compassion

1Ci, 10:55 - 12:45, 5 December 2023
Immersive digital story intervention on empathy in Nursing students: Findings and reflection
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Promotional abstract: This session presents findings from the authors' and their co-researchers' scheme of work on storytelling, empathy and compassionate care. It discusses the results of randomised control trial on a storytelling simulation 'Walking in their shoes' set in a clinical practice suite on adult student nurse empathy. This RCT demonstrated a significant difference in empathy immediately after the intervention that was not maintained over time. The session will also consider the problem of maintaining empathy among healthcare students' overtime and how the storywalk intervention was improved following a fidelity study and a review of student responses and the adoption of a simulation model based upon reflection. The new storywalk intervention is currently being tested.

Summary: Empathy is a vital component in effective compassionate interactions between nurses and patients (van Dijke, van Nistelrooij et al. 2020) and this is acknowledged in undergraduate nursing curriculum in the UK and many other countries. Helping behaviours driven by empathy are enshrined in The Code for Nurses, Midwives and Nursing Associates (NMC 2018). Recognition of its importance has been partly driven by serious failings in patient care reported in the UK where a lack of respect, empathy and compassion in care resulted in abuse, negligence or even death (Francis 2013, Andrews and Butler 2014). Health care professionals are no doubt empathetic during shared experiences, but the patient experience starts earlier and finishes later than that interaction. We have developed an immersive digital story intervention called "Walking in Their Shoes" for a teaching and learning environment in simulation, using a story from a real patient with bowel cancer. The patient recounted her journey and experiences of being in hospital for cancer treatments, her feelings about the hospital surroundings, and her interactions with health professionals. Most of these experiences focus on events that occur outside of the patient-health care practitioner interaction, some of them seemingly trivial but having a great impact upon the storyteller. The importance of this is to enhance empathy through promoting understanding that the patient experience extends beyond shared experiences and interactions with health care practitioners. Increasing health care professionals' empathy for such events can only benefit the patient. The story was audio recorded. Nine digital clips (some with still images) were generated from the story. Each clip has a unique web-address (URL) that is linked to a unique Quick Response (QR) code, a type of bar-code that can be read using smartphone technology. Clips were organised to follow the patient's journey in a chronological order as she recounted it, and each positioned at a commensurate location in the simulation centre. Thus, a physical 'Story Walk' was created for participants to immerse themselves in the patient's stories while 'Walking in Their Shoes' around the physical environment. An initial evaluation of this intervention was carried out with nursing students between May 2018 and December 2019. Some of these were presented in a poster at NET2019 and we were invited to return and present our results. The final results showed an immediate increase in empathy, but the increase was not sustained (Yu et al. 2021). Since then, we have conducted a fidelity review and other work and have refined the intervention to increase engagement with the intervention incorporating ideas around reflection in simulation education theory (Husebo et al. 2015) and Batson's ideas on empathy (Batson 2009) to produce a reflective activity designed to improve engagement with the intervention. We hope this will increase attention on the intervention and thus improve empathy. These changes

have had ethical approval and the second phase of this study is underway seeking to replicate our first study findings on differences in empathy and whether we can sustain these changes over time. Demonstrating a method that can improve empathy and sustain it over time has implications for maintaining and providing compassionate care among health professionals. If successful, this can be incorporated into the designing and developing of continual professional development activities that promote compassionate care and interventions.

References:

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