

Learning from final year nursing student stories of rural practice

Penny Paliadelis, Pamela Wood, Chris Mesagno, Wendy Penney, Joanne Porter

Federation University Australia, VIC

This paper reports on a project that gathered final year nursing students' reflections on clinical events or situations that they experienced during rural clinical placements that they felt were memorable and meaningful for their future practice as Registered Nurses. Students from a rural university were invited to participate and describe and then reflect on 2 events they experienced during their clinical placements over the 3 years of their studies, which were predominantly undertaken in rural and regional health care settings. Data were gathered online in the form of de-identified stories uploaded as forum postings, with each participant providing a structured description of both events and then a reflection on how these events might contribute to their successful transition to practice. This project was underpinned by a storytelling pedagogy based on compelling evidence that stories provide an ideal vehicle to promote reflection and prompt deep learning. Humans are 'hard-wired' to learn from stories as both the teller and the listener, and so a storytelling learning framework was considered ideal to guide this project.

A total of 275 narratives about clinical events and student reflections on these were captured, and the data analysed thematically to identify emerging key themes such as 'Respect and Disrespect', 'Fitting In', 'Compassion and Caring', 'Administering Medications', 'Ethical Dilemmas', 'The Realities of Practice' and 'The Power of Role Models'.

These themes were identified by all members of the project team using an iterative process, with the aim of creating insights into future students' learning needs for clinical placements. The data will inform a series of articles for publication, with the primary aim of sharing these insights to contribute to a greater understanding of students' learning experiences during placements. This paper provides an overview of the processes involved in gathering, analysing and reporting on the data. Finally, some of the preliminary findings will be presented, as they provide a window into the experiences of nursing students in rural and regional health contexts.