

Improving Nursing Students' Sense of Well-Being Using the Health Promotion Model

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NUR 547: Promoting the Health of Populations

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March 6, 2022

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As a clinical nursing instructor for a baccalaureate nursing program, I teach mostly traditional nursing students who appear continuously stressed out. This issue can make it difficult for students to focus during their clinical day. They begin to forget things they studied and sometimes have difficulty answering the simplest questions. Baker et al. (2019) describe how anxiety affects the autonomic system, causing cognitive symptoms like worry or apprehension, trouble concentrating, and negative thoughts. To optimize the students' clinical time and learning experiences, the clinical instructor needs to identify ways to help ease students' anxiety and support their sense of well-being during the clinical day.

Description of Population

Nursing students experience high levels of stress and anxiety, particularly traditional nursing students. Traditional nursing students can be defined as “students under the age of 24, enrolled full-time in a nursing program, speak English as their first language, and have no dependent children” (Bryer et al., 2013). They often live on campus, though some students may commute. Like other majors in college, new nursing students begin the program at a young age bringing with them many insecurities. The transition into independence brings financial burdens to pay for their schooling, their housing, and their transportation. Many students who live on campus do not own their own vehicle so finding transportation to their clinical sites is an additional stressor they may face.

Description of Social Determinants

The fear of failing the nursing program, anxiety to meet social and family expectations, and the transition into adulthood are some examples of the stressors traditional nursing students endure (Saraiva de Lima et al., 2020). Nursing programs tend to be more intense than other

majors with students spending more time in labs, non-traditional clinical times, and long study hours leaving these students feeling emotionally drained and sometimes isolated (Bryer et al., 2013). Clinical placements have become challenging for many nursing schools and students are sometimes placed in clinical from 3-11 or mentorship on 11-7. Their clinical locations may be up to an hour away from the school, for students with transportation difficulties this may lead to a lot of anxiety. In 2016 the nursing student retention rate was only 80%, leaving roughly 20% of nursing students to drop out of the program (Franco, 2021). With the current national nursing shortage, it is crucial to implement interventions to improve nursing students' morale.

Description and Relevance of the Theory

Using nursing theory provides a scientific basis to nursing care and a broader understanding of the challenges nurses face (Saraiva de Lima et al., 2020). Some assumptions from the Health Promotion Model (HPM) that apply to nursing students are that they value growth that is viewed positively and try to find balance between change and stability while actively seeking to regulate their behavior (Pender 2011). Students commit to engaging in behaviors that they believe will benefit them. These are the motivational factors that keep nursing students in school, students believe their hard work will pay off once they graduate. Nursing students can find it challenging to find balance between change and stability. They have more stress, spend more time in class, more time in labs and clinical compared to other student majors. Due to the increase in stress students tend to adopt poor eating and sleep habits, poor exercise habits, and sometimes experience an increase in alcohol consumption or smoking despite their knowledge of a healthy lifestyle (Bryer et al., 2013). Pender's (2011) eighth HPM theoretical proposition "persons are more likely to commit to and engage in health-promoting behaviors when significant others model the behavior, expect the behavior to occur, and provide

assistance and support to enable the behavior” specifically applies to the intervention of guided mindful meditation during pre-conference. The nursing instructor is substituted in as the significant other and is in a unique position to lead and model mindful meditation which may increase the students’ comfort level in participating, decrease overall stress while at clinical, and increase the student's sense of well-being.

Proposed APN Lead Intervention

The clinical instructor as an APN can integrate self-care practices to decrease stress and anxiety into clinical so that the benefits of health-promoting behavior can be incorporated into the students’ lifestyle as recommended by Nevins et al. (2019). Nursing students with optimal self-care will have a more positive effect on patient care and experience less burnout.

Mindfulness is defined by Franco (2021) as “paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally”. The benefit of practicing mindful meditation at the start of each clinical during pre-conference is that it does not cost anything, it does not take a long time, and has been proven to decrease stress and anxiety (Franco, 2021). Mindfulness provides a holistic way of helping nursing students to manage their stress and adjust more effectively. The APN will use techniques of conscious breathing and guided imagery at the start of pre-conference sessions. This may be facilitated by using an app on a smart phone, or other device, or directed by the instructor, depending on the instructor’s comfort level. Teaching students’ mindful meditation will reduce stress, promote relaxation, and enhance attention (Conelius & Iannino-Renz, 2021). Students will develop knowledge, skill, and confidence in the use of these mindful techniques and may use them while delivering holistic care in their clinical practice.

Description of Measurable Outcomes

Beginning on the first day of clinical, nursing students will be asked to fill out an anonymous survey to rate their anxiety. The survey will be designed using Baker et al., (2019) Anxiety Symptoms Questionnaire (ASQ) as a guide. The ASQ was designed to assess a range of symptoms that can be applied to nursing students as in; nervousness, worrying, irritability, difficulty relaxing, lack of energy, difficulty concentrating, and impairment in functioning due to anxiety. The survey uses a scale of 0-10, with 0 being no anxiety and 10 as a feeling of extreme distress. The anonymous survey would be handed out before the mindful meditation and then again after the mindful meditation is completed to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. This will be implemented during each pre-clinical conference and evaluated for effectiveness each week by the APN. Feedback to the nursing instructor would be encouraged.

In conclusion, traditional nursing students experience a high level of anxiety while adapting to adulthood and often a new life away from home. The stress they experience may result in them dropping out of the nursing program altogether. Supporting nursing students during clinical through mindful meditations is one way the APN can help students reduce their overall feelings of stress and anxiety. Reducing students' anxiety may help retain nursing students in the nursing program and promote a sense of well-being.

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