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'This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Parry, Y. K., Hill, P., & Horsfall, S. (2018). Assessing levels of student nurse learning in community based health placement with vulnerable families: Knowledge development for future clinical practice. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 32, 14–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2018.06.015>

which has been published in final form at

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2018.06.015>

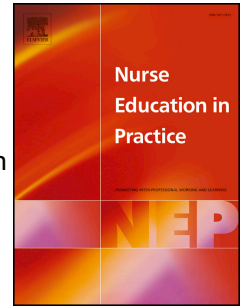
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Accepted Manuscript

Assessing levels of student nurse learning in community based health placement with vulnerable families: Knowledge development for future clinical practice

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PII: S1471-5953(16)30212-8

DOI: [10.1016/j.nepr.2018.06.015](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2018.06.015)

Reference: YNEPR 2424

To appear in: *Nurse Education in Practice*

Received Date: 21 November 2016

Revised Date: 12 June 2018

Accepted Date: 29 June 2018

Please cite this article as: Parry, Y.K., Hill, P., Horsfall, S., Assessing levels of student nurse learning in community based health placement with vulnerable families: Knowledge development for future clinical practice, *Nurse Education in Practice* (2018), doi: 10.1016/j.nepr.2018.06.015.

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Title page**Assessing levels of student nurse learning in community based health placement with vulnerable families: Knowledge development for future clinical practice.**

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Acknowledgements/Contribution/Funding statements

We would like to acknowledge the hard and dedication of the UnitingCare Wesley Bowden team and the student nurses for their insightful contribution to this research. No funding was provided for this research project. The time, expertise and skills used to undertake this research formed part of YKP and PH's community service contribution.

Highlights:

- Nursing placement needs to enhance the connections between psychosocial theories and nursing practice
- Acute care placements may miss the application of psychosocial theories to nursing practice.
- 100% of the nursing students surveyed believe their future nursing practice benefited from the provision of a psychosocial placements

Abstract

Background: Community services work with vulnerable families to assist them to link with health, education and welfare services. Community placements provide nursing students with understandings of the health impacts of social circumstances on broad population's. Nurses provide health care for vulnerable populations so it is important for students to gain experience in dealing with various population groups in a variety of settings. Community placements can increase student confidence to provide care for all people in the acute care setting.

Objectives: The research project explored the use of a community placement to assist nursing students in applying psychosocial theories to practice; determining the affect of nursing students to the community service; and if the learning achieved in the placement was applicable to their future nursing practice were also objectives of the research.

Design: The mixed methods design used placement suitability focused questionnaires, and student, staff and clinical supervisor one-to-one interviews.

Settings: In 2015 a community based homelessness service which provides a home visiting service approached the School of Nursing and Midwifery to provide a community placement for nursing students.. The urban homelessness service caters for 350 homeless clients per month.

Participants: Eight second year nursing students and six fulltime homelessness staff, mainly social workers, participated in the surveys and interviews.

Methods: Nursing students were 'buddied' with a social worker and visited individuals and families recently placed in emergency housing. The student nurses (8) and homelessness staff (6) were surveyed and interviewed about their knowledge, skills and perceptions about the value of community based placements.

Results: Findings indicate student's recognition of the skills to be learned in a non-acute setting are applicable to all clinical settings and enhance student knowledge and potential future care. The staff in the homelessness service espouse the enhancement provided by the expertise of the nursing students working with vulnerable populations. This paper highlights the benefits as perceived by students on often undervalued community based placements.

Conclusions: It is essential that universities collaborate with industry and consumers to ensure that the undergraduate programs offer a high standard of care and address current trends in the health care industry. There is a growing need for workforce development in primary healthcare and an increased understanding about how adversity can lead to ill health.

Keywords: Interdisciplinary professional placement, Nursing assessment, Primary care placements, Psychosocial nursing care, Psychosocial theories, Vulnerable families.

Background

Increasingly, nurses provide care for society's most vulnerable, unwell groups (Baglin and Rugg 2010, Gerber 2013). Given this work, there is an awareness of the importance of community based placements for students of nursing. The placement of nursing students in a complex social context enhances the experiential and clinical links between psychosocial theories and social environments, workplace culture, and the complexities of patient care (Papasavrou, Lambrinou et al. 2010), while enhancing access to health services for populations with limited health care options (Parry and Willis 2012, Parry and Grant 2015, Parry, Ullah et al. 2016). Homeless families represent an increasing proportion of the vulnerable population with limited access to health care services (Parry, Grant et al. 2015). Linking the need for practical application of psychosocial theories to the needs of vulnerable populations can enhance the learning and professional placement experience of nursing students (Baglin and Rugg 2010, Papasavrou, Lambrinou et al. 2010, Gerber 2013, Parry 2014).

Improving access to health care for homeless families is important as previous research found a lack of access to health services among homeless families led to poor health in their children (Gibson and Johnstone 2010, Gerber 2013, Parry and Grant 2015, Parry, Grant et al. 2015). This can often lead to lifelong ill health and a lack of service utilisation (Hunter 1993, Parry and Willis 2012, Hitchcock, Gillespie et al. 2014, Hwang and Burns 2014). The primary focus of the homelessness case manager is finding accommodation with subsequent links and referrals to other services for support. The homelessness case manager's focus is not primarily on child health development, child assessment or children's psychological and parental health issues (Gibson and Johnstone 2010, Gerber 2013, Parry and Grant 2015, Parry, Grant et al. 2015). Therefore, gaps in health assessments at this early intervention/crisis stage are evident. Consequently, homelessness staff do not focus on families' health needs, preventative health strategies or on any of the potential health issues requiring intervention (Gibson and Johnstone 2010, Gerber 2013, Parry 2014, Parry and Grant 2015, Parry, Grant et al. 2015). Research has also highlighted the lack of staff knowledge regarding infants, and child development (Parry and Grant 2015, Parry, Grant et al. 2015), knowledge regarding child immunisation and other normal child health needs with a notable lack of formal and informal referral pathways into health services identified (Parry, Grant et al. 2015). The addition of nursing students on placement in the homeless service was recognised as addressing a need, and adding value to the services provided, while contributing significantly to students learning and workplace learning among staff (Anderson 2009, Parry 2014, Parry and Grant 2015, Parry, Grant et al. 2015).

This research project explored the experiences of student nurses and homelessness staff during a Professional Experience Placement (PEP) within the homelessness sector. The project enabled nursing students to gain assessment skills and to apply psychosocial theories of health to the community setting. It also provided the homelessness services

clients with much needed health promotion, referrals, and advice and assisted homelessness services to engage with at risk infants, children and their families.

Homelessness service providers are often the 'first to know' that children are at risk and unless the staff have skills to work across education and health care sectors, children will not receive the interventions they require. This article reports on research that used interviews with nursing students, homelessness workers and clinical supervisors to address the identified gaps in health for homeless families (Philipps 2012, Parry 2014, Parry and Grant 2015, Parry, Grant et al. 2015, Parry, Ullah et al. 2016) and to enhance future collaborative practice (Parry 2014, Parry and Grant 2014, Parry, Ullah et al. 2016).

Literature Review

Psychosocial theories and nursing

Internationally it is recognised that enhancing student's confidence, to meet the needs of increasingly disadvantaged populations groups, can be achieved through community placement (Anderson 2009, Baglin and Rugg 2010, Murphy, Rosser et al. 2012) . This confidence has been shown to augment care in acute care settings (Anderson 2009, Baglin and Rugg 2010, Murphy, Rosser et al. 2012). Broader psychosocial assessments are used in community placements addressing the dearth of psychosocial assessment opportunities in acute care (Anderson 2009, Baglin and Rugg 2010, Murphy, Rosser et al. 2012). The immediacy of physical care is often prioritised in acute care (Anderson 2009, Baglin and Rugg 2010, Murphy, Rosser et al. 2012). As such traditionally, acute care settings have provided limited opportunities for the application of developmental psychosocial theories and limited the understandings of the impact of broader social determinants of health on health outcomes for patients (Anderson 2009, Baglin and Rugg 2010, Murphy, Rosser et al. 2012). In order to address this translation of theory to practice gap community placements have become an integral part of the Bachelor of Nursing curriculum. Thus providing chances for students, regardless of year level, to apply psychosocial knowledge and understandings to nursing care. To improve patient care and to understand how psychosocial characteristics impact on health it is imperative to explore the student experiences of community placements. This exploration also needs to ensure collaborative partnerships are maintained and enhanced throughout the research process.

Additionally, interdisciplinary psychosocial placements are important opportunities to apply psychosocial theories (O'Keefe, Wade et al. 2014, Smith and Grant 2016, Smith and Grant 2016) and provide experiences of working in an interdisciplinary team. Exposure of nursing students to the social circumstances in which families and individuals live (Parry 2014, Parry and Hill 2016) also confirms the impact of the living conditions on health outcomes (O'Keefe, Wade et al. 2014).

Smith and Grant (2016) point out the importance of pedagogic changes in nursing education to include psychosocial influences on health. The psychosocial paradigm places the person at the centre of good health (Parry and Hill 2016, Smith and Grant 2016). Theories, such as

Bronfenbrenner, describing psychosocial development as a set of characteristics that impact on development, contain broader and more complex understandings of the development of factors that impact on health (Parry and Hill 2016, Smith and Grant 2016).

Furthermore, Papastavrou et al (2010) highlight the close relationship between theory and practice for nursing students (Papastavrou, Lambrinou et al. 2010), asserting that clinical learning takes place in complex social contexts that are inclusive of workplace culture and the complexities of care. Nursing student's exposure to complex social and health care delivery environments can therefore enhance the application of psychosocial theories to clinical care and future practice. Psychosocial assessment of a patient is an extremely important part of nursing care but often under prioritised in preference to immediate physical care requirements. The application of developmental psychosocial theories to clinical practice, and assessment techniques, can be difficult to achieve in traditional acute care placements.

The Study

Design

The use of mixed methods research methods is recommended when investigating complex health sciences and health policy issues related to healthcare access (Parry and Willis 2013). The combination of survey, demographic, epidemiological and narrative data can provide an understanding of the complexity of health access issues (Parry and Willis 2013). Additionally, mixed methods can be used to explore complex social issues by using two or more data sets to confirm, refute, or question the findings (Parry and Willis 2013). Understanding social actions requires the use of inductive and deductive reasoning processes in order to understand complex interactions and the appropriate applications of mixed methods (Parry and Willis 2013). The mixed methods processes used here consisted of sequential methods. The survey data results informed the qualitative questions.

The use of correlations is important in exploring the relationships between characteristics of interest (Osborne 2010). Here the nursing students were asked to rate their knowledge of the homelessness sector and score 1 to 3. Another questionnaire asked the nursing students to self-rate their impression of the demand for support available to homeless people, whether the homeless sector was visible on the political agenda and if homelessness was 'visible'. The correlational analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 23 program.

The student nurses and homelessness staff were surveyed and interviewed by the researcher about their knowledge, skills and perceptions of the value of community based placements. Interview transcripts were analysed for emergent themes. Second year nursing students assessed homeless families using clinical and psychosocial assessment tools, linking psychosocial theories to clinical placements. The results from both methods were used to triangulate the results improving the robustness of the findings.

Aim

The aim of the research project was twofold as it explored if student nurses could apply psychosocial theories to a community placement experience and if the community service benefited from the nursing student's placement. Additionally, the ultimate aim of any placement is to ensure that the placement provides practice experiences that would be useful to the student's future practice. Therefore, this community placement also needed to provide students with an experience that complemented their future clinical practice.

Ethics

A mixed methods study design was used to explore the student experiences and received ethics approval from the university Research Ethics Committee.

Methods

Introduction to the setting

The Homelessness Service (ISHS) provides services to a suburban area 20 kms from the Adelaide central business district (CBD). The service supports mostly families. The service has recognised the importance of community based placements for nursing students given their work with vulnerable, unwell groups (Parry and Grant 2015; Parry, Grant et al. 2015). The placement of second year nursing students in a community based setting with families who traditionally have limited access to health services had two main aims. Firstly, previous research found a lack of access to health services amongst homeless families leading to poor healthcare for their children (Parry 2014; Parry, Grant et al. 2015). Secondly, the homelessness sector service staff had a differing focus than that of a health worker, some staff having limited knowledge and skills about child development, health assessment, psychological and mental health issues (Parry and Grant 2015; Parry, Grant et al. 2015). Consequently, they were unable to identify families' health needs and potential issues requiring intervention (Parry and Grant 2015; Parry, Grant et al. 2015). The addition of nursing students on placement in the service was recognised as adding value while also contributing significantly to the students learning and to the learning of the sector staff (Parry and Hill 2016).

The student nurses and homelessness staff were surveyed and interviewed about their knowledge, skills and perceptions of the value of community based placements. This captured the experiences and impact as perceived by students, staff and clinical supervisors.

The homelessness service provided placements for:

- Nursing (22),
- Social Work (8)

The nursing students completed a two week primary health care placement. The students, were supported by the homelessness service's Team Leader and by two academic staff, and the homelessness service team. The service team consisted of mainly social workers and provide home visits. The nursing students provided nursing assessments, referral activities and professional practice. Pre and post placement surveys containing open and closed questions were conducted by ISHS for quality assurance purposes. Semi-structured face to

face interviews following the community placement were also undertaken by university research staff. After the placement, seven participants were interviewed face to face or by phone and asked to compare and contrast their reflections on their placement. The interview transcripts were read by two of the researchers, and analysed for emergent themes, words or ideas which described the community placement experience.

Theoretical underpinnings

As highlighted in the literature review above there is an unmet need for the inclusions of comprehensive psychosocial assessments of a patient as it is extremely important part of nursing care but often under prioritised in preference to immediate physical care requirements in the acute care setting. This placement using the broader notion of holistic and psychosocial care sought to provide students with an experience that tested their current knowledge on a social issue and critique how this issue may impact on the patients' health and their health outcomes. The main aim of the topic was to provide an opportunity for students to integrate theory and practice in both acute and community healthcare settings and develop skills in patient-centred integrated care. One objective was for students to learn how to adapt their practice to differing practice situations and contexts taking into account the role of families/carers/community and the setting in which the care is provided. This topic learning outcomes also assisted the students in exploring the use of community services and the interdisciplinary supports available for disadvantaged populations. This opportunity illustrated for the students the importance of community care and a unique possible career pathway outside the acute care sector. The topic learning outcome and theoretical underpinnings, such as Bronfenbrenner explain the importance of psychosocial and holistic care and this placement provided the opportunity to apply these theory's directly to a patient and to illustrate how these theories maybe applied in the student's future registered nursing practice.

The use of social constructivist methods is invaluable in understanding the relationships between Usefulness is the extent to which the research is useful in describing social constructs and interactions of a phenomena and the application of the research for use by the community, professions and academia (Hansen 2006). This provides a broader understanding of the social constructs and themes influencing the student's incorporation of the theories such as Bronfenbrenner to nursing practice and the use of acute care services by vulnerable populations.

Results

This interdisciplinary placement also provided the homelessness service staff with an insight into the role of nurses. This research highlights the benefits as perceived by students on often undervalued community based placements. The student nurses and homelessness staff were surveyed and interviewed about their knowledge, skills and perceptions of the value of community based placements.

This paper reports on these findings and results indicate student's recognition of the skills to be learned in a non-acute setting "are relevant and useful in traditional nursing roles". The staff in the homelessness service support the improvement provided by the expertise of the nursing students working with vulnerable populations. This article reports on the outcomes for students of the benefits, or otherwise, of community based placements and its relevance to future acute care practice.

The correlations between the student's responses to the visibility of homelessness and homelessness on the political agenda were related with $r = .803$, $p < 0.000$, indicating a strong positive correlation between these two variables. Therefore, if the student believes homelessness was visible then they were more likely to believe that homelessness was present on the political agenda. Further, if the nursing students surveyed had some knowledge of the services that supported homeless people then they were more likely to believe that homelessness was visible in the community with $r = .732$ and $p < 0.000$. This shows a strong and positive correlation between these two variables. Additionally, if the nursing students believed that they had knowledge of the services that supported homeless people then they more likely to believe that homelessness was on the political agenda with $r = .640$, $p < 0.000$. The students' knowledge of homelessness services and the supports available improved the student's understandings of homelessness overall. These results indicated the importance of nursing students understanding the homelessness and community services sector. This knowledge and experience may be used in the future to ensure care responses are inclusive of community services and interdisciplinary team members.

The placement topic learning outcomes identify the application of the placement experience to future nursing practice as a core result. This placement achieved this outcome and this is established by the results below. Table 1 below illustrates the impact of the placement on the nursing students' knowledge of the sector and the extent to which the placement addressed their learning needs. The nursing students indicated that the placement had practical applications to their clinical needs and their future clinical work as a Registered Nurse.

Table 1 The usefulness of the homeless sector placement for the nursing students.

Question	Agreement
On this placement I have increased my knowledge about homelessness	100%
The homelessness placement has responded to my professional needs	92%
The knowledge gained in this placement will enhance my professional	100%

nursing practice	
This placement has Increased my awareness of community services outside the hospital setting e.g. domestic violence services	100%
I feel a lot more confident in referring and speaking to services outside of the hospital setting	100%

The topic learning outcomes also emphasis the awareness of students of the social determinants of health. That is the broader impact of life circumstances on health. The placements in this sector have successfully achieved this and this is evident inn table 1 the majority of students found the placement beneficial and met their professional needs. However, one student did not feel that the placement responded to their needs because although they found it interesting and 'learnt a lot from the placement' the nursing student believed that 'I'm under a lot of pressure to do second year nursing degree placement stuff and need as much clinical practice as possible'. This was valuable feedback for the researchers, clinical staff and homeless sector staff and has aided in the development of resources to support the student nurse, such as Nurse Practitioner access during their placement. Additionally, the frankness of the responses could also illustrate the level of acceptance experienced by the nursing students eliciting this feedback to the homeless sector staff.

Furthermore, the explicit responses provided in the quantitative survey informed the topics discussed during the open-ended interviews. The qualitative questions explored the aspects of the placement not capture by the questionnaires. The result of the qualitative portion are presented below.

The qualitative results provide a deeper insight into the managers, staff, and students experiences of the homelessness services placement. This feedback was important as it allowed the researchers and staff to address any concerns raised by the students anonymously with the students, and any subsequent students.

Bronfenbrenner's model

One of the psychosocial models explored in the Bachelor of Nursing program is Bronfenbrenner's model of eco/psychosocial development. The nursing students (NS) and clinical staff stated that now they 'understood the model and how it impacted on health'. The students believed they had experienced 'first hand' how a variety of influences impacted on the individual and the need for diverse services to address the needs of vulnerable populations. The quotations below captures the student nurses views:

It was great... I didn't think it would be you know not enough acute care, BPs etc. but it really helped me connect ... Bronfenbrenner and that stuff... I really understood all those influences on health. It's made me a better nurse (NS1)

All the students interviewed responded in a similar manner to the nursing student (NS) above. This illustrates the importance of psychosocial experiences for nursing students when applying theory to practice. Another strong theme from the data was that of myth busting.

The myths of homelessness and the importance of home

All of the students and clinical staff interviewed spoke of the importance of having a 'place to call home'. The students had not explored the concept and context of home, belonging and family support in their clinical placements previously and had not applied the theories of these to placement before. The placement also helped the students to make the connections between the theories that describe the importance of belonging and support on an individual and families' health outcomes. As illustrated in the quotation below:

I have never really thought about homelessness before...I have always taken having a home for granted (NS2).

Not having a home impacts on everything, just everything. It gives me a whole appreciation of how lucky I am to have a home. All the illness, health, mental, and physical problems, that goes with homelessness, it really struck me (NS6).

I was shocked, I thought homelessness was old men, but there are families and they lost their job, and that was it...it really surprised me, and challenged my thinking (NS4).

I understood homelessness, but I'm from India and it is different there. I understand more about homelessness in Australia now (NS3).

The students also acknowledged the precarious nature of housing and homelessness. The challenges to their thinking about homelessness and homeless populations. The students highlighted the importance of home as concept and place. The students also recognised the impact of homelessness on health.

Access to services

Another prominent theme in the interviews was access to services. The students found that the psychosocial theories and the placement aided them in understanding the variety and diversity of services. Along with the paramount importance of access to services needed by families in crisis, the students recognised that access to services had barriers that were often beyond the control of the individual. Furthermore, these barriers caused ill health by exacerbating health issues, whereas service access increased positive health outcomes both physically and mentally. Additionally, the students better understood the nature of homelessness and the supports required by homeless families. Exemplified in the quotation below:

I know that other services are available now, and I can refer to, to help when clients have problems...access to services is so important... the families have lots of needs and you need to make sure that you know where to send them (NS4).

They [homeless families] need so much and sometimes it's just not there... it just makes their health worse... they don't know where to go to get help, so you have to know (NS7).

This placement assisted the students in understanding the numbers, variety and diversity of services provided by the not-for-profit, non-government sector. Broadening their understandings of health provision beyond acute and tertiary care in hospitals. This also enhanced the student's understandings of community based preventative care. This is illustrated in the quotation below:

I know what other services are out there...and that nurses can do a whole lot of roles. I never knew this before (NS2).

Furthermore, the placement aided the student's awareness of other professional roles in the community that the nurses could access or pursue as career pathways. This has expanded the career options for student nurses.

Staff attitudes to vulnerable groups and students

The students participating in the research acknowledged the compassion and empathy of the homelessness sector staff in dealing with vulnerable populations. This is explained in the quotation below:

The staff there they were just great. Even the admin staff. They were all so kind and helpful to the homeless families. I admired that sometimes you don't see that in the hospital (NS5).

The service provided an extensive information package to the students and took them to conferences and symposiums while they were on placement. It was very inclusive and comprehensive environment... I think that helped the students... they

enjoyed the placement so much I was surprised but then they cared so much so maybe no surprise (CS2).

The clinical staff and students also commented on the attitude of the homelessness services staff to their clients. The ability of the homelessness service staff to listen to the clients and link them into services was also acknowledged. The clinical staff also acknowledged how the compassion of the Homelessness staff was extended to the students on placement. As the clinical staff stated *'they were so kind and supportive to our students, above and beyond at times'*. The service provided extensive support to the students and a 'welcome' pack explaining the service, the placement and the roles of staff and students.

Importance of discharge planning

When asked about the application of the placement to their future practice. The students all spoke about the impact of the placement on their knowledge of outside services. Along with the influence of the placement on discharge planning. Knowing which organisations can help people with housing, parenting, immunisations, child assessments, job seeking and other aspects of their lives. This knowledge, the students believed would improve their discharge planning. This is stated in the quotations below:

It has helped me thinking that when I'm in the hospital and I discharge a patient I know I can do that better now. (NS 2).

I know more about discharge planning and how I can discharge appropriately. (NS 6)

I know so much more now about what's out there and how I can link patients in...it's so important (N7).

The students acknowledged the previous gap in their knowledge regarding the plethora of services outside acute care. The importance of these services and their usefulness in discharge planning was noted. The students especially stated the importance of discharge planning and being mindful of community services available to support vulnerable patients.

Nursing and nursing assessments

The students and clinical staff were genuinely surprised at the depth and breadth of the nursing assessment accomplished in this clinical placement. The students were also pleasantly surprised as to the extent of their own knowledge and their role as trusted professionals. This is explained in the quotations below:

The staff are all Social Workers so I was able to talk to the woman about the impact of her illness on her life and how the disease would progress. And she listened to me... I never knew I knew so much (NS 6).

I've only ever supervised in the hospital setting before but the staff [homelessness staff] and organisation [homelessness service] were great and the students did get to

do full assessments including living conditions...I think a few were a bit shocked at how people become homeless the student nurses were fantastic...one of the best placements from a supportive environment aspect (CS 3).

The student nurses very good, just fantastic...our clients don't scare them, and they are so great...explaining health, treatment, medications, and they all knew so much it was such a great help to our clients and us as staff. They explained care and how the person would deteriorate, so now we knew what to look out for as well (HS 3).

We are trusted...the clients trust us and open up to us...it was such a surprise to us [nursing students] and the staff (NS 5).

The student nurses were fantastic the best placements we have ever had... they're not afraid of working with difficult clients and the clients really opened up to them, trusted them... one client asked about medications and the NS was able to go through each... very professional and used language the client could understand...it helped him and me to understand some of his issues and possible medications interactions (HS 2).

Most of the family members receiving services have multiple complex health issues and the staff found the nursing students helped the staff understandings of health services and assistance needed by the clients. The nursing students provided individual assessments, psychosocial assessments, and reviewed the living conditions of the clients. For example, the nursing student arranged for an Occupational Therapist assessment and a shower chair for one mother who was using a small plastic stool for her disabled son. The homelessness staff had not realized that access to allied health support was possible for this client.

Discussion

Teaching students of nursing about the broader population through community based placements with disadvantaged groups increases the student's confidence in dealing with the variety of people they will encounter in the acute care setting (Baglin and Rugg 2010; Murphy, Rosser et al. 2012; Gerber 2013; Papasavrou, Lambrinou et al. 2010; Parry and Hill 2016).

The psychosocial assessment of a patient is an extremely important part of nursing care but often under prioritised in preference to immediate physical care requirements (Murphy, Rosser et al. 2012; Parry and Hill 2016). The application of developmental psychosocial theories to clinical practice, and assessment techniques, can be difficult to achieve in traditional acute care placements (Papasavrou, Lambrinou et al. 2010; Murphy, Rosser et al. 2012; Parry and Hill 2016). This placement provided a unique opportunity for nursing students and the homelessness staff to incorporate health access into home visiting for homeless clients.

All the students and clinical staff agreed that they were treated with respect and had increased knowledge about homelessness as the service provided the students a variety of

different learning experiences. Students had learning opportunities including home visits with various case managers to meet clients, meeting with a variety of professionals working in the homelessness sector, watching DVDs, visiting numerous agencies such as an Aboriginal domestic violence shelter , in order to fully comprehend broader issues of homelessness.

The comments and literature above support the importance of community placements in improving hospital practices for homeless families through increased understanding about different social responses to homelessness has added value to their knowledge about nursing specific practices and expertise. The placement also increased the nursing students understanding of primary health care and community services.

The research reiterated the importance of debriefing, good working relationships between the university and placement venues, and unique student experiences on placements (Burns and Patterson 2005). Skills, such as face-to-face communication and assessment set in an ever-changing environment (Burns and Patterson 2005) were heightened by this placement. The students demonstrated the ability of the students to recognise social, physical and mental health issues occurring in this client group. Further, the students demonstrated the ability to recognise the implications of psychosocial factors on an individual's health. Additionally, the nursing students recognised the impact of poverty on a person/families health and stated they had increased their ability to provide enhanced support and make links to psychosocial theories.

This community placement has provided a number of specific outcomes, such as team approaches to clinical supervision (O'Keefe, Wade et al. 2014), increased group and team cohesion (O'Keefe, Wade et al. 2014), increased student positive learning experiences (O'Keefe, Wade et al. 2014) and increased workflow practices (O'Keefe, Wade et al. 2014). These outcomes were identified by staff and students and are supported by the literature on positive placement experiences (O'Keefe, Wade et al. 2014). Additional benefits such as enhancing the psychosocial aspect of care which is important for the holistic and appropriate care provided by nurses could be further enhanced for students by working beside a Nurse Practitioner.

Recognition from the students and the staff that there is a need for nursing services at the homelessness service is a significant move forward in this sector. This would enhance the services provided to the clients as the presence of nursing students highlighted some gaps in service provision. This research enabled the students to connect and understand the application of psychosocial theories to clinical practice. Furthermore, the research has provided feedback to the staff at ISHS and Flinders University on the suitability and effectiveness of the placements for the nursing students' future clinical practice and highlighted areas that need to be addressed in order to enhance the student experience and provide appropriate supports for the students.

Limitations

Given that all writing and scientific evidence is socially constructed and therefore biased (Kelly & Bonnefoy 2007), the results of this research are restricted to the social constructs within this society and the organisation involved. However, other societies of a similar social construct may find the results of this research transferable. Given this, the extent to which the variables measure the occurrence of the phenomena is also socially constructed and their usefulness in the correlations statistical procedure may need revision.

Conclusions

This placement provides primary health care for people who 'fall through the gaps' in the health care system. The placement of nursing students in community based non-acute care settings provides a truly integrated approach to learning through a combination of academic and work-related activities. The placement in a homelessness service allowed the student nurses to explore the true meaning of psychosocial theories and contexts. Expanding the concept of health access.

Additionally, this placement adds value to the local community by giving back to the community in a sustainable way with an achievable quality student placement. This ensures the university is attuned to the needs of its local community and actively builds capacity within the community through expanded service provision.

The topic expectations of ensuring the community placement context occurs within a high quality collaborative relationship with the community partner(s) is reflected in the attention the placement/organisation staff give to each student and the extent to which the students were supported by the staff. The feedback from both students and staff supports the conclusion that the services exceeds the expectations of the university in being a quality placement for future nursing staff.

This research result has informed our next research project into the impact of a nurse practitioner ensconced in a homelessness service. While this has been done effectively in Australia to meet the health needs of single homeless people it has not been done for families and children.

Acknowledgments

This research was unfunded, collaborative and formed part of the authors community service and educational scholarship activities.

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Contribution of authorship statement

This paper titled **Assessing levels of student nurse psychosocial learning in community based health placement with vulnerable families: Knowledge development for future clinical practice** is the work of all the contributing authors. YKP and PH performed the analysis of all the interviews. YKP conducted the correlational analysis. SH conducted the quantitative descriptive analysis. YKP and PH wrote the manuscript, and SH assisted with the evaluation and editing of the manuscript.

Contribution of the paper

What is already known about the topic?

- Teaching students of nursing about the broader population through community based placements with disadvantaged groups increases the student's confidence in dealing with the variety of people they will encounter in the acute care settings
- Community placements may enhance student's understandings of the broader health services environment beyond acute care.

What this paper adds

- This research demonstrates the practical application of psychosocial theories to students placement is enhanced by community placements
- The paper outlines the connections and understandings made by student through the application of psychosocial theories to clinical practice.
- This placement provides primary health care for people who fall through the gaps in the health care system.
- The placement of nursing students in community based non-acute care settings provides a truly integrated approach to learning through a combination of academic and work-related activities