

Unintended pregnancy, options counselling & abortion care content in undergraduate nursing text books used in three Queensland universities.



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Background

- Frontline health care workforce
- 307,000 nurses/midwives employed compared to 88,000 medical practitioners (2015)¹
- 89% of nurses and midwives are female¹
- Ideally positioned to support women with an unintended pregnancy

¹Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Workforce overview: Australian Government; 2017



Background

- Limited information on nurse education and abortion care
- Foster, 2016 New England study (response rate 22%, n=20)
 - 50% did not include options counselling and abortion care
 - 80% not a priority/time constraints
 - 20% religious affiliation of institute
 - 20% lack of clinical placement
- Mizuno, 2013 Japan study (response rate 33%, n=77)
 - Focus on legal issues rather than nursing care



Methods

- Review of core subjects across UG nursing curriculum at JCU (n=19), UQ (n=20) & CQU (n=20)
- Identification of subjects that included, or were likely to include reproductive health, ethics and law
- Accessed text books used in identified subjects
- Index search: abortion, pregnancy (unplanned, unwanted, termination), reproductive health



Methods

General nursing texts

- Reviewed
 - chapter where topic was included
 - chapter/section learning outcomes
 - inclusion of Australian statistics/trends
- Assessed against competency framework (modified)
- Tone of content

Law/ethics texts

- Topic inclusion



Results

7 general textbooks

- 5 used by 2 + universities
- 2 used by UQ only

- 4 of the 7 had some mention of the topic

4 ethics / law text books

- no overlap between universities

- 3 of 4 included topic

Results

General text books	University	Content
○ Lewis's medical-surgical nursing: assessment & management of clinical problems (2015)	JCU, UQ	yes
○ Potter and Perry's Fundamentals of nursing (2013)	UQ	yes
○ Kozier and Erb's Fundamentals of nursing (2015)	JCU, CQU	yes
○ Pillitteri's child and family health nursing in Australia and New Zealand (2016)	UQ	yes
○ Lemone's Medical –surgical nursing – critical thinking for person-centred care (2014)	UQ, CQU	no
○ Best & Frederick Yatdjuliging Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island nursing & midwifery care (2017)	JCU, CQU	no
○ Berman & Snyder Skills in clinical nursing (2017)	JCU, UQ, CQU	no
Law/ethics text books		
Atkins, Britton & de Lacey, Ethics and law for Australian nurses (2017)	UQ	yes
Savage, Legal issues for nursing students (2015)	CQU	yes
Johnstone, Bioethics, a nursing perspective (2019)	JCU	yes
Staunton, Law for nurses and midwives (2017)	JCU	no



Results – law /ethics text books

- Atkins (2017)

- 7 pages
- Australian law and abortion
- History of Australian abortion laws
- Moral issues
- Nurses' responsibilities

- Savage (2015)

- 3 pages
- Abortion
- Counselling and consent
- Free decision making
- Application to practice

- Johnstone (2019)

- 14 pages
- Abortion
- What is abortion
- Arguments for & against the moral permissibility of abortion (conservative, moderate & liberal position)
- Abortion and the moral rights of women, fetuses and fathers
- Abortion, politics and the broader community

Results – general text books

Chapter titles

- Assisting the family with contraception planning
- Sexual Health
- Sexuality
- Nursing management: female reproductive problems

Learning outcomes

- Nothing specific to unintended pregnancy options or abortion in any of the texts

Rates/Trends of abortion in Australia

- In one text only



Results – general text books (n=4)

	Competency area	Number of text books
1	Professional responsibilities	1
2	Care free of bias and judgement	2
3	Recognition of unique needs of vulnerable populations	1
4	Identification of personal beliefs	2
5	Ability to apply ethical principles	2
6	Current laws	2
7	Abortion service options/access & referrals	0
8	Abortion methods	3
9	Patient education - abortion complications/post abortion contraception	1
10	Adoption options	1



Results

- 'once decision is made to have an abortion, the woman and her family need support and acceptance'
- 'nurse's caring attitude can be a positive experience in the patient's experience'
- 'nurses need to support women in non-judgemental way to make their decision about whether or not to have an abortion'
- 'be certain to give women of all ages having elective termination the same kind of explanations and support that women in labour receive (women do not share termination experiences with each other the same way as they share labour experiences, so women usually have received little advanced preparation)'



Results

- 'grief and sadness are normal emotions after an abortion'
- 'this is a volatile issue and no public consensus has yet been reached'
- 'all women undergoing ToP should be provided with the details of accessible counselling services so that they may be assisted to integrate this often enormously disruptive and potentially distressing event in their lives'
- 'the usual profile of a woman who is having such a procedure is a woman who is young and unmarried, has no previous live births, undergoes the procedure to end an unwanted pregnancy and has not taken any or adequate protection against becoming pregnant.'



Conclusion & Next Steps

- Variable information presented across text books
 - Particular lack of information around:
 - vulnerable populations
 - patient education
 - how to access services
 - Some underlying judgemental statements apparent
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- Analysis of midwifery texts
 - Survey of nursing educators
 - Survey of students

Resource: Nurses for Sexual and Reproductive Health

<http://nsrh.org/>

- NSRH is a national grassroots organization dedicated to providing students, nurses and midwives with education and resources to become skilled care providers and social change agents in sexual and reproductive health and justice.
- Over 30 campus chapters in over 20 states
- ACE – Abortion Care Education

