

Using an Interpretive Research Group to Teach Communication and Understanding in Undergraduate Psychiatric-Mental Health Nursing Students

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Abstract:

An interpretive research group based in existential phenomenology is used to facilitate student learning about skills central to nursing--communicating, listening, and a genuine understanding of "the other"--in an undergraduate psychiatric-mental health nursing course. Shattell and Hogan present a teaching strategy consistent with the Educative-Caring Model of nursing education in which student-faculty interactions are egalitarian and active learning is necessary.

Keywords: Nursing, College students, Teaching methods, Mental health, College faculty, Curriculum development, Psychiatry

Article:

An interpretive research group based in existential phenomenology is used to facilitate student learning about skills central to nursing--communicating, listening, and a genuine understanding of "the other"--in an undergraduate psychiatric-mental health nursing course. Students and faculty meet in small groups to analyze interview transcripts from ongoing research. This teaching strategy is consistent with the Educative-Caring Model of nursing education in which student-faculty interactions are egalitarian and active learning is necessary (Bevis & Watson, 1989). A goal of the interpretive research group learning activity is to facilitate the students' integration of theory and research into practice. For example:

- * Active learning strategy: Student and faculty participation in an interpretive research group
- * Theory: Existential phenomenology
- * Research: Data analysis in an interpretive research group.
- * Student practice: Students will "collect paradigm experiences, develop insights, see patterns, find meaning in ideas and experiences, [and] examine assumptions...with the moral ideal of the caring scholar-clinician" (Bevis & Watson, 1989, p. 277).

Procedure

A maximum of eight students and two faculty from the undergraduate psychiatric nursing course comprise the interpretive research group. A transcript from a faculty research project that has been approved by the Institutional Review Board is photocopied for each student. An overview of the research is provided. The process of analyzing meaning and themes from the interview is discussed. Each student signs a confidentiality pledge, witnessed by the faculty. Students are seated around a table with two readers in the middle (sitting across from one another) and one faculty member at each end. The first reader reads aloud the initial interview

question, which is open ended and seeks an in-depth description of the research participant's experience. The second reader continues with the transcript, reading aloud the participant's response. This process continues until a student or faculty member stops the readers for a group discussion of meaning, themes, communication strategies, or process. At the conclusion of the interpretive research group, transcripts are collected by the faculty and shredded.

The interpretive research group meets weekly for 4 hours at an off-campus site in a reserved meeting room at a local coffeehouse. Students sign up for a minimum of four sessions during the semester in lieu of 2 clinical days. Students are expected to learn about communication and the interview process through their direct participation in the analysis of interview transcripts. Each student is required to write a 1-2 page reflective paper after each interpretive research group, addressing the following two areas:

- * The content of the analysis (i.e., what was the research participant's experience?).
- * The process (i.e., what did you learn about communication, meaning, patterns, and group work?).

Outcome

Student papers have produced encouraging results, showing that this active learning strategy is valuable. Students have gained a deeper understanding of communication, a greater appreciation for the first-person perspective of the patient/study participant, and a positive experience of research. One student said, "I didn't think about this kind of stuff being research; I would enjoy doing this." Learning was also evident in the following student's comment: "I think every member present left with a better understanding of just how important communication, and especially listening and comprehension, is essential in the art of the interview."