Enhancing Cultural Competence in Undergraduate Nursing through Short Term International Immersion: A Content Analysis of Students’ Reflective Journal

Pamela J. Hodges, PhD, MSN, RN
Claudine Dufrene, PhD, MSN, RN, GNP
Kelly Vandenberg, PhD, MSN, RN
Learner objectives:

- The learner will be able to understand methods of enhancing cultural competence in undergraduate nursing students.
- The learner will be able to verbalize benefits international immersion of undergraduate nursing students in a service-learning project.

There is no conflict of interest.

University of St. Thomas Carol & Odis Peavy School of Nursing

There was no sponsorship or commercial support.
Purpose

To explore the impact of international immersion of undergraduate nursing as a means of enhancing cultural competence.
Background

- Students participated in 1 week volunteer experience in Guatemala
- Mission team at Casa Angelina Orphanage in Antigua
- Service-learning projects with personnel & local workers
Various projects included: mixing cement, carrying brick tiles, painting, cleaning, digging ditches, landscaping.
Background

Interacted with orphans daily in the morning & afternoon
Method

- Content analysis of students’ reflective journals

- Revealed themes:
  - Value of seeing cultural differences in another country
  - Value of nonverbal communication
  - Value of service-learning & selfless giving to the needy

- Most frequently used word- “amazing”
Results

- Every student reported having a life-changing experience.
- They were all able to identify:
  - less fortunate and less privileged.
  - those living in poverty and very unlike their own lives.
- Many expressed a desire to return for another trip after completing their nursing program.
- Some spoke of pursuing professional opportunities abroad as they begin their nursing careers.
Results

Study abroad & service-learning programs allowing this type of experience may enhance preparation of nursing students for culturally competent practice in the future.
Conclusion

- An international immersion suggests an opportunity for enhanced cultural competence of nursing students.

- Continued investigation including study abroad courses & service-learning opportunities.

- Integration of cultural safety & competence throughout the undergraduate program is necessary to determine the extent & overall value of the learning experience.

- Teaching & learning strategies as well as issues focused on curricular design may result in greater student/faculty cultural awareness & appreciation.
Limitations

- This is pilot work completed prior to incorporating a formalized study abroad component at one small university school of nursing.

- It is not generalizable and transferability is exceedingly limited.
Future Implications

- More detailed directions
- Obtain instrument to measure cultural awareness
- Begin journaling one month prior to travel
- Journal daily during trip
Questions
Contact Information

Pamela J. Hodges, PhD, MSN, RN
Hodgespj@stthom.edu

Claudine Dufrene, PhD, MSN, RN, GNP
dufrenc@stthom.edu

Kelly Vandenberg, PhD, MSN, RN
vandenk@stthom.edu