

Abstract

Original Article

Creating Space for Reframing Perspectives of Long Term Care: A Reflective Practice Initiative with First Semester Baccalaureate Nursing Students

Margaret Trueman, EdD, RN, CNE

Assistant Professor, Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, North Carolina, USA

Correspondence: Dr. Margaret Trueman, Fayetteville State University 1200 Murchison Road Fayetteville, North Carolina, United States E-mail: mtrueman@uncfsu.edu pegtrueman@gmail.com

Abstract

Background: Research has demonstrated the need to help students cultivate a value for gerontology beginning with development of a positive perspective of this population. The educational implications of these studies support having an early, positive clinical component in the care of the older adult population.

Objective: This study examined the perceived impact of theoretical learning through a literature review exploring functional abilities and quality of life in the older adult, experiential learning through informal interactions with assigned residents, and reflection to confront assumptions regarding the older adult and long term care.

Methods: The study used content analysis to identify themes expressed by students in reflection of their own perceptions and feelings regarding the quality of life of older adult residents in long term care.

Results: Two themes emerged from the thematic analysis: “The Epiphany: Transformation of Assumptions” and “Life is Still Good”. Students’ reflections revealed the realization of the importance of what they had read and what they experienced in their interactions with the residents. Their previous negative assumptions of long term care and the older adult residents were, in essence, shattered by the knowledge and reality of the care environment. Additionally, was the realization that, despite the need for long term care, residents had a positive outlook in regard to both their functional abilities and their quality of life. Students found instead that residents were more apt to frame their day from what they could do rather than what they could not do or needed help to do.

Conclusion: This project’s findings of a shift in attitudes regarding quality of life of the older adult in long term care supports the value of introducing nursing students to geriatric nursing care from a lens of positive capabilities and attributes rather than one focused on self-care deficits.

Keywords: nursing students, older adult, quality of life, functional abilities, reflective practice