Barriers to Fostering Empathy in Simulation

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Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify barriers to fostering empathy utilizing simulation pedagogy.

Background

- Empathy is a critical attribute of effective communication and is the foundation for both positive nurse-patient relationships and quality patient-centered care. [1]
- Empathy can have a positive effect on **patient satisfaction, health outcomes, patient compliance, and a nurse's professional satisfaction.** [1,3]
- Empathy declines during nursing school. [5]
- Nurses become fixated on tasks and technology at the expense of communicating empathically with their patients. [4]
- Students immersed in simulation training while utilizing mannequins might lose perspective on the patient's lived experience and not develop quality interpersonal skills, including empathy. [2]

Methods

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:
- NLN Jeffries Simulation Theory.

DESIGN:
- Qualitative interpretive phenomenological approach.

PARTICIPANTS:
- 14 nursing simulation faculty who work at colleges or universities on the East Coast of the United States with both baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs.

DATA COLLECTION:
- In-depth, face-to-face or telephone semistructured individual interviews.

DATA ANAYLSIS:
- An interpretive approach to data analysis was employed. This interpretive approach was derived from Heideggerian hermeneutics.

Major Findings

- National organizations, administrators, content and simulation pedagogy educators, and nursing students often don't value or buy into supporting empathy.
- There is a lack of clarity around concept of empathy. Some similar concepts include: compassion, sympathy, pity, caring, patient-centered care, and effective or therapeutic communication.
- Too much content in nursing education dilutes the concept of empathy.
- Lack of authenticity in a simulation makes it difficult to suspend disbelief and foster empathy. Use of mannequins can be a barrier to fostering empathy.

- Resources such a time, money, and effort are required to foster empathy.
- A facilitator's lack of values, knowledge, skills, or role modeling can inhibit the ability to foster empathy in participants.
- A highly competitive environment clashes with empathy development.
- Participants' personal characteristics can be barriers to developing empathy in nursing simulations.

Conclusions

- There are multiple barriers to fostering empathy in simulation.

Recommendations

- A greater awareness and understanding of the benefits of empathy need to permeate nursing education. Empathy needs to be valued and promoted among stakeholders.
- Conceptual clarity on the concept of empathy.
- Develop a curriculum map that includes scaffolding of empathy.
- Incorporate use of standardized patients and confederates into simulation.
- Enhance realism of simulation through props and moulage, creating realism in environment and in the scenario or story, and utilizing content experts.
- National organizations need to develop and distribute free simulation scenarios that cultivate empathy in nurses.
- Provide professional development for nursing educators.
- Engage students in the patient's perspective.
- Create an environment that is positive and empathic. Approach with caution using simulations as a summative evaluation.

References

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