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Second degree BSN students preconceived attitudes towards the homeless, marginalized, and impoverished: A pilot study

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The current economic climate of the United States has contributed to the crisis in health care delivery services. As a result, an increasing number of individuals present as indigent and vulnerable. Currently, there are 50.7 million uninsured Americans with literature clearly reflecting an association between poverty and ill health. With a number of economic barriers to health care, it has been suggested health care providers' attitudes and subtle prejudices have also contributed to access. These preconceived negative attitudes can shame and embarrass vulnerable, homeless, immigrant and impoverished individuals from attempting to access care. This research attempted to identify preconceived attitudes that second degree baccalaureate nursing students possess prior to clinical exposure to indigent and immigrant populations through qualitative and quantitative investigative methods. Senior level community health students preparing to deliver health care at a suburban homeless day shelter were asked to describe their experiences and opinions relative to indigent persons before and after their actual contact with this population. Collected data suggest there are subtle stereotyping and negative attitudes regarding the plight of overtly impoverished individuals before rendering care. After the eight-hour clinical experience with the aforementioned population, attitudes toward the vulnerable slightly improved suggesting clinical and didactic exposure to the plight of impoverished populations may assist to sensitize student nurses to exude compassion through a holistic therapeutic nurse-client relationship.

Biography

Mary T Boylston has completed her Doctorate in Educational Leadership in 2005 at Immaculata University. She is an Advanced Practice Board Certified Holistic nurse, full Professor and End of Life Coordinator and Trainer. She has been appointed by the Collegiate Commission of Nursing Education as a site visitor. She has also worked for the PA Department of Education. While at Eastern University, she has served as Nursing Informatics Coordinator, Faculty Development Director and two stints as Chair of the Department of Nursing and she is the editor of the Nursing Connections magazine.

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