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Coming full circle: A reflection on two innovative teaching methods for mental health nurses

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Two of the pillars of skilled mental health nursing are the ability to work well in groups and the capacity to work collaboratively with people who have the experience of mental health diagnoses. As educators of mental health nurses our educational approaches and methods should facilitate the development of those skills. One of the current challenges for nurse educators is the range of subject knowledge that students have already accrued via their peers and social media. In addition, the wider demands of the mental health nursing profession require graduates who can work effectively within and across a range of professional groups and teams in an articulate and credible fashion; who can lead innovation in clinical care and research and who have the positive attributes which demonstrate good citizenship. Thus, more familiar didactic methods of teaching should give way to a more contemporary approach which takes into account the students' prior learning and experiences. A module using enquiry based learning enabled students to develop their voice, articulate their ideas and present them with confidence and credibility in a group setting. A further module included service users in the module design, delivery and evaluation and provided students with an innovative approach to working with people with the diagnosis of borderline personality disorder. Through evaluation of those experiences for all participants, what emerges as common ground is; that people learn best through telling stories sharing experiences and working together. Both approaches are valued by students as providing an additional dimension to their learning.

Biography

Elizabeth Brodie attained an Honours degree in English Language and Literature from the University of Glasgow before embarking on Mental Health Nurse Training. She worked in various areas of Mental Health but the main focus of her career has been in Acute Mental Health and Substance Misuse. She completed her PGDip in Drug and Alcohol Studies at Imperial College, London and attained a PG Cert. in teaching and learning in Higher Education from Edinburgh Napier University. Her Master's dissertation is related to the overprescribing of benzodiazepines in primary care. She currently contributes to the undergraduate nursing curriculum and post-graduate curriculum planning at Edinburgh Napier University and is a Director of CREW 2000 a peer and volunteer lead agency which specialises in education and harm reduction for people who use substances and their families. Her current subject interests are the role of new psychoactive substances in pregnancy, the effects of NPS on young people with type 1 diabetes and the role of substances among university students. Her educational interests include enquiry based learning and meaningfully involving people with lived experience in the development and delivery of student nurse education; and the role of substance misuse education on nursing students.

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