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Enticing new graduates to pursue mental health nursing

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The recruitment and retention of qualified mental health nurses is a concern with an aging mental health workforce in Australia. It is a challenge because mental health nursing is not a popular career path for most nurses entering the workforce. Mental health nursing is one of the least desirable career options. It is important to determine the factors that may divert or attract students/nurses to mental health nursing. The aims of the study are to determine the factors that motivate nurses in rural and regional South Australia to pursue mental health nursing and to identify the strategies that might entice students/nurses to pursue mental health nursing as a professional career. A descriptive qualitative study design with semi-structured interviews was used. Ethics approval was obtained from the university and the country health. Key individuals were approached in various hospitals and community health centres to distribute information letters and promote the study. 15 face to face interviews were conducted. The majority of the interviewees were in the 50 years age range. 13 were females and two were males. The majority had varied nursing backgrounds before going into mental health nursing. The factors that motivated the participants to pursue mental health nursing were complex, multifactorial and may be categorised as intrinsic and/or extrinsic. The strategies that might entice students/nurses to pursue mental health nursing were many but the most popular suggestion was the provision of high quality meaningful clinical placements in mental health.

Biography

Joy Penman completed her Bachelor and Master's degrees in Nursing and Pharmacy. She completed her Doctoral studies in Palliative Care. She teaches at School of Nursing and Midwifery, Whyalla Campus. She has over 30 years of teaching experience locally and abroad and many years of nursing experience in various health care facilities. She has extensive experience in research and community engagement as well. In recognition of her contributions, she has been a recipient of various teaching, research and community service awards. She has earned internal and external research funding for various collaborative projects. She has published her papers in peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed journals, conferences and books.

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