

30th World Congress on

ADVANCED NURSING PRACTICE

September 04-06, 2017 | Edinburgh, Scotland

Nursing students' reflective stories of memorable clinical placement experiences: what did they learn?

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Storytelling is strongly embedded in nurses' professional culture and used effectively in nursing education. Educators use a variety of storytelling modes with students and the recent emergence of digital storytelling adds a new dimension. All storytelling modes can support students' reflections on, and learning from, practice. It has been noted in the literature that using personal narratives for reflection can deepen emotional awareness and promote deep learning. Students engage with stories as meaningful accounts of feelings, events, situations and contexts that can prompt reflection and learning. This paper reports on the outcomes of a study that explored the use of digital storytelling as a means of prompting student reflections on clinical learning outcomes. Final year nursing students were asked to describe and then reflect on a clinical situation that they felt was meaningful for their future role as registered nurses. The outcomes of this study identified that the participants effectively reflected on the lessons they learned during clinical placements and discussed how that they would use what they learned. The 3 key themes identified were; 1) learning to reconcile the differences between ideal, evidence-based practice and the sometimes less than perfect realities of clinical workplaces, 2) identifying strategies to help them to make a successfully transition from student to registered nurse and integrate into the nursing workforce, and 3) reinforcing their commitment to nursing as a career. Overall this study concluded that digital storytelling was a pedagogical approach that encouraged reflection on clinical learning experiences.

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