The Student’s Experience of Learning Caring

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Overview

- Caring has been identified by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) as an essential value for baccalaureate education across all programs of study.
- The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experience of students learning caring in a college of nursing grounded in a caring philosophy.

Participants/Setting

- Sample included 7 senior BSN students
- Ages ranged from 21 – 48 years
- The FAU-Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing was the setting for this study.
- The faculty at FAU have defined the focus of nursing as nurturing the wholeness of persons and environment through caring.
Data Analysis

- Colaizzi’s 7-step process of analysis was used to analyze the data.
- The steps acted as a guide for reflection during the research process.
- While analyzing the data, emerging themes were identified.
- The themes identified have revealed information we have not yet seen or identified in the area of caring theory.

Major Themes

- 2 Major Themes emerged:
  - (1) Innate Knowing of Self as Caring
    - Supported by 3 sub-themes.
  - (2) Caring in the Curriculum
    - Supported by 3 sub-themes.

Innate Knowing of Self as Caring

Supported by the 3 sub-themes of:

- Being Present for the Patient
- Being Open to Reshape the Patient’s Experience
- Enhanced Capacity to Care
Caring in the Curriculum

Supported by the 3 sub-themes of:

- Clinical Experiences Valuable to Learning
- Doing Little Things to Express Caring
- Learning Activities facilitated Understanding Caring

Innate Knowing of Self as Caring

- This is a reflection on self and about who the students are as persons.
- Each of the students did not think they could be taught to care.
- Each was emphatic that caring was something they had already had within prior to coming to nursing school.
- Student’s story . . .

Caring in the Curriculum

- This is not about doing per se, not being “sweet,” it’s seeing the power of the act that makes it nursing.
- The nurse does it by seeing the wholeness of the situation.
- One student stated, “learning this sort of philosophy is a kind of art form, to be able to relate to people on a different level is very valuable.”
- Student’s story . . .
Implications for Education
- Role modeling of caring attitudes and displaying caring enhances the learning environment for the students.
- Nurse educators need to nurture the student’s sensitivity to the human condition.
- Students clearly reported that the way they were instructed to write-up their assignments required them to think about the uniqueness of the patient in that nursing situation.

Implications for Research
- Follow-up research with these participants after they have worked for a couple of years.
- Replicate this study with a more diverse sample group.
- Replicate this study in a school of nursing that does not have caring as a central tenet in its philosophy.

Implications for Practice
- Students recognized caring and non-caring behaviors displayed by nurses.
- Students were able to differentiate the technical nurse from the caring nurse and affirmed their desire to be caring nurses.
- Students stressed that the patients wanted the nurse to have a caring attitude.
Implications for Practice

- The expressions of caring the students described were reminiscent of Boykin & Schoenhofer’s “dance of caring persons.”
- By “going with the flow” in their nursing situations these students had the ability to create a new meaningful experience for their patients and as a consequence there was mutual growth in caring.

Implications for Theory

- Mayeroff’s *Caring Ingredients*: Knowing, Alternating Rhythms, Patience, Honesty, Trust, Humility, Hope, and Courage were evident in their stories.
- Using the *Caring Ingredients* in their written assignments helped the students to “think that way.”
- Walking into a patient’s room with a “clean slate” demonstrated their use of alternating rhythms with patients.

Implications for Theory

- The research supported Roach’s attributes of Caring: Compassion, Competence, Confidence, Conscience, Commitment, and Comportment were apparent in the stories.
- As their education progressed, it became natural to “think and prepare that way.”
- Critical Reflection – another attribute.
- Students recounted the value of reflecting on their patient care and written assignments in facilitating their learning of caring.
Summary

The results of this study revealed caring can be learned.

Students graduating from this nursing program know the power of their caring and the impact it has on the meaning of the experience for their patients.

Summary

Living out caring experiences with their patients and reflecting on nursing situations about their patient’s enhanced the students learning of caring.

As these students sought meaning in their caring interactions with patients they demonstrated their caring knowledge, skills competence, openness to the human condition, and an ability to transform practice.

References