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The Fabric of a Career in Mental Health Nursing from an Australian and UK perspective

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Recruitment, Education and Retention

Australia

- One pathway to registration.
- Specialisation the focal point of post graduate studies.
- Less focus on mental health craft skills (Singh et al 2009, Hercelinskyj, 2011).
- Decline in the number of nurses choosing mental health as a career (Edward et al, 2009, Happell, 2006, Stuhlmiller 2005)

United Kingdom

- Four pathways to registration
- Specialisation in mental health available
- More graduates finishing than positions available*.
- Move toward a more generic focus of training and worries about diluting the mental health content (Baker et al, 2010; Robinson & Griffiths, 2007)



Aim of the Project



- Australia and the United Kingdom (UK) share concerns regarding the recruitment and retention of nurses to the field of mental health care. This study sought to uncover what UK and Australian students perceived as motivational factors toward working in the context of mental health care.

Participating organisations



- Four universities in Australia
- Two Universities in the United Kingdom

Method



- A mixed methods study.
- 2nd year (Aust.) 1st year (UK) nursing students.
- A 12 item questionnaire was utilised comprising both quantitative and qualitative components.
- Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS (V.18.0).
- Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis.
- Ethical approval was gained from all 6 Universities involved.
- Recruitment was by survey monkey and classroom (Aust.) and in the classroom setting (UK).

Sample

- N= 447
- Australia n= 249 – 1st & 2nd year undergraduate nursing students
- UK n=198* - 2nd year undergraduate & postgraduate preregistration nursing students

Findings – Quantitative (Australia & UK)



83% female

Average age 20-24 (44% of the sample)

81% Caucasian

76% identified themselves as living local (within 50km or 31 miles) of the university

Half of the sample had experience of simulation in their education

Nearly half had previous/personal experience of mental health:

95 (39.4%) Australian respondents

106 (53.8) British respondents

82% did not have work experience in the field before university:

60 (30.5%) British respondents reported prior work experience in the field

21 (8.7%) Australian respondents reporting prior work experience in the field

Findings – Quantitative

- A series of analyses were undertaken to identify factors which may be linked with propensity to consider a career in mental health amongst Australian respondents. British respondents were excluded from this analysis, as it could be assumed that the British sample was self-selecting due to the specificity of the British mental health nursing degree.
 - χ^2 tests for association did not find any significant associations between propensity to consider a career in mental health and any of the “experience-related” factors

Findings - Qualitative (Australia)

- Previous experience of mental illness
 - The majority of experience with mental health services was exposure when on clinical placement
- Motivation to do mental health nursing
 - Responses indicated that the subject matter was interesting but they were not motivated to enter the area: Others were motivated by contact with clients/patients



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Findings – Qualitative Experience-UK

Significant experiences reported were:

- Of previous work or voluntary experience
- Of family/friends having a MH problem.
- Of personal experience of a mental health problem.



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Findings –Qualitative-UK

- Motivational factors reported were:
- Working in the field;
- Academic (theory & skills sessions);
- Clinical colleagues;
- Interest/prior knowledge in mental health.
- Future prospects

Discussion



- Differences in the nursing degree programmes offered in the two countries were also apparent in the responses to the question regarding experience of mental health education:

Discussion Continued



- Experience prior to and motivation to undertake a mental health nursing career
- Professional socialisation
- Simulation as part of student learning
- Matching apples and oranges

Implications

- Recruitment.
- Professional Socialisation.
- Relations to previous studies
- Further work
- Future collaboration



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