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Using Narrative for Inter-Disciplinary Learning

Rachel Balen, Christine Rhodes & Lisa Ward
CAIPE definition:

'Interprofessional Education occurs when two or more professions learn with, from and about each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care'

CAIPE 2002 ([http://www.caipe.org.uk](http://www.caipe.org.uk))

HUDDERSFIELD addition:

the quality of student experience and positive engagement with the public'
An additional concern -

The lack of critical thinking skills amongst undergraduates (and graduates)
WHY NARRATIVE?

Stories involve

- Inquiring into experience
- Exploring meaning
- Interpreting human experience
- Looking for `truth`
- Giving a voice to those who might be silenced, neglected or marginalised
Increasing body of evidence to show that lived experience is a meaningful learning experience for students

- It is `memorable`
- They can relate to it as individuals
- It emphasises the humanity of the health and social care professions
Types of narrative:

Romance:
- Initial challenge is overcome

Comedy:
- Ongoing challenge and counter-challenge

Tragedy:
- Ongoing struggle against adversity, but ultimately fails (Murray M, 2008: Telling stories and making sense of cancer)
Inter-Disciplinary Learning Day

"Mental health: It’s everybody’s business"
Range of narrative workshop activities:

**Target groups:**
- Social Work (25)
- Mental Health Nursing (25)
- Adult Nursing (25)
- Midwives
- Occupational Therapists } (25 in total)
Outcomes to be achieved during the workshops:

- relevant to the curriculum that students are currently engaged in.
- allow students to interact in interprofessional groups.
- enjoyable and 'add value'.
Session aims:

• understand the lived experience of mental health difficulties

• explore the perspectives of different professional groups

• consider implications for practice
An introductory exercise followed by 3 different narrative workshops. Students attended all 3 on a rotating basis.
Completion of evaluation form
Introductory exercise:
(producing their own mini-narrative)

Interprofessional groups produced a poster, collage or haiku that reflected what `mental health` means to them.

Materials provided were flip-chart paper, felt tip pens, magazines and newspapers.
Mental health is me
It dictates who I will be
Changes like the sea
* * * * * * * *

Happy, sad, feel confused
Voices make me hide away
This affects us all
Narrative through Film  (Tragedy: Ongoing struggle against adversity, but ultimately fails)

An excerpt from a TV dramatisation of the biography of an alcoholic, homeless man with mental health difficulties - *Stuart: A Life Backwards*. This was followed by a facilitated discussion.

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Narrative through drama

(Comedy: Ongoing challenge and counter-challenge)

A theatre group of mental health service users used their personal experiences to act out a scenario concerning a woman with depression, featuring responses from family, friends and employer. This was followed by an interactive discussion.
A service user presented a monologue based on her experience of mania following childbirth. Students explored questions and issues raised during a facilitated discussion.
Evaluation exercise:

Students compiled a feedback sheet answering the following questions:

- What have you learned about the lived experience of mental health difficulties?
- What have you learned from spending the day with students from other professional groups?
- What will you take away from today that you will use in practice?
**A reminder:** The evidence base for using Narrative

Increasing body of evidence to show that lived experience is a meaningful learning experience for students

- It is `memorable`
- They can relate to it as individuals
- It emphasises the humanity of the health and social care professions
Session aims:

• understand the lived experience of mental health difficulties

• explore the perspectives of different professional groups

• consider implications for practice
Student responses:

The day managed to combine an excellent balance between group discussion, lecture, presentation and story telling which I found kept the day exciting and challenging. I really believe the University should continue to develop this multi disciplinary approach as the benefits to students are immense.
Scores Given By Students on IPL Day

- Score 10
- Score 9
- Score 8
- Score 7
- Score 5
- Score 3
- Score 1
• I didn't realise what I could learn from the OTs

• This will help me as I have greater awareness of mental health issues, how different professions can work together to provide effective care
I have never before gained such a detailed insight into mental health problems from a sufferer’s perspective. It has helped me to understand the stigma and effects of such illness from an alternative viewpoint.
Hearing or seeing first-hand experiences increases a feeling of empathy.

I have a better understanding of how mental health affects people's lives, this can be used in my practice to empathise with people.
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