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## Stimulating an interest in mental health nursing

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# Stimulating an interest in mental health nursing

**Abstract**

A team of researchers at the University of Wollongong are currently examining the experiences of Bachelor of Nursing (BN) students as they engage in a stimulating learning experience in mental health.

**Keywords**

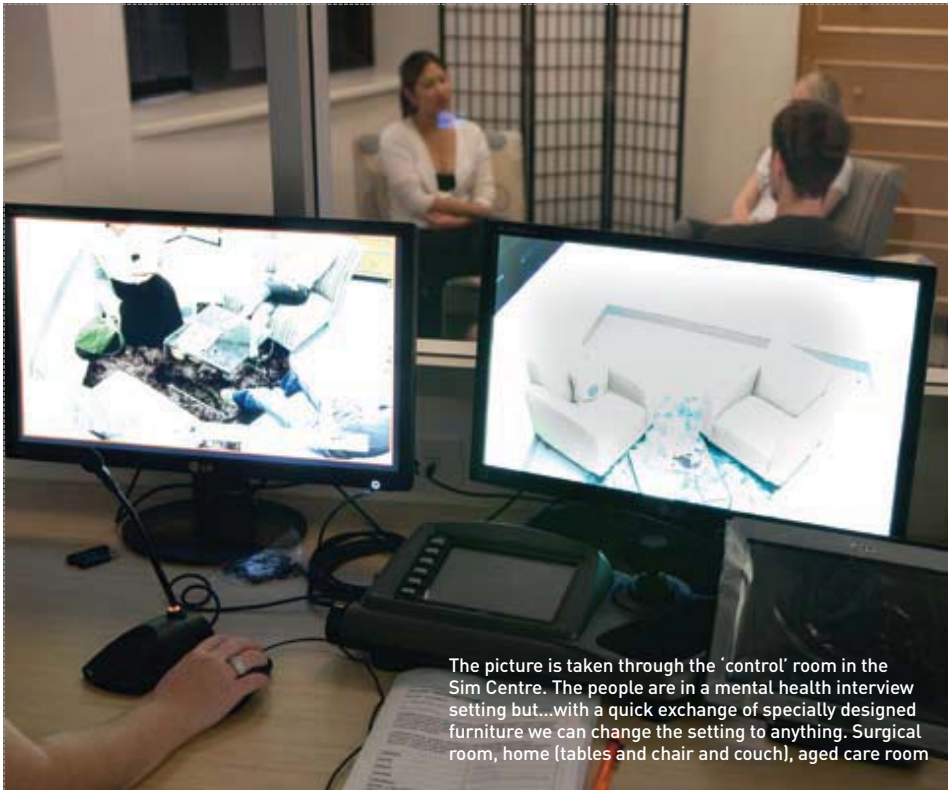
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The picture is taken through the 'control' room in the Sim Centre. The people are in a mental health interview setting but...with a quick exchange of specially designed furniture we can change the setting to anything. Surgical room, home (tables and chair and couch), aged care room

## Stimulating an interest in mental health nursing

BY **LORNA MOXHAM, RENEE BRIGHTON, TERRY FROGGATT, SUSAN LIERSCH, AND PATREA ANDERSEN**

A team of researchers at the University of Wollongong are currently examining the experiences of Bachelor of Nursing (BN) students as they engage in a stimulating learning experience in mental health.

BN students are being exposed to the realities of mental health nursing through the use of a simulated learning environment. The project is led by Dr Lorna Moxham, Professor of Mental Health Nursing in the School of Nursing Midwifery and Indigenous Health.

The centre has numerous nursing labs, breakout and tutorial rooms that use technology to stimulate nursing thought by simulating practice. Students learn about the complexities of mental health nursing in undertaking a mental health assessment of a simulated client. Students who are not in the interview rooms view the 'live action' in a tutorial room where their learning is facilitated from a mental health professional or mental health academic.

The simulation centre has been designed to meet a variety of discipline needs. In this instance, the general ward environment was transformed into a mental health assessment

room by using adaptable furnishings. Students entered the space and encountered a typical interview room and simulated client.

They interviewed the client and were captured doing this by simultaneous transmission through a camera to a tutorial room while other students observed. Issues covered included: developing a rapport with a person who may be paranoid, depressed, hearing voices or affected by alcohol or drugs; body language; open ended questioning; probing; cultural safety; validation of feelings; and numerous other skills used routinely in mental health nursing practice.

Student feedback indicated a positive learning experience. The major theme to emerge from in-depth interviews were 'how real' the experience was and how important 'this reality' was for successful translation into clinical practice.

**DR LORNA MOXHAM** IS PROFESSOR OF MENTAL HEALTH NURSING IN THE SCHOOL OF NURSING MIDWIFERY AND INDIGENOUS HEALTH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG IN NSW.

**RENEE BRIGHTON, TERRY FROGGATT, SUSAN LIERSCH, A/PROF PATREA ANDERSEN** ALL WORK IN THE SCHOOL OF NURSING, MIDWIFERY AND INDIGENOUS HEALTH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG IN NSW

## The MHNIP nurse at Integral Health Armidale

BY **ANNA TRELOAR**

"I enjoy going to work, and when I don't any more, I'll know it's time to stop and I'll tell you". Thinking about what is different about being a credentialled mental health nurse under the Mental Health Nurse Incentive Scheme and working in a busy general practice, the answer was unexpectedly provided by a patient who told me she enjoyed coming. I could not say all my previous patients have enjoyed being involuntarily admitted to inpatient units, or being constrained by a community treatment order, or receiving clinical advice which they preferred not to take at the time.

Suddenly, here was a patient who in her mid-70s, and after a difficult life, had found time and opportunity to learn more about her anxiety disorder. She also gained a greater understanding of a family history of anxiety disorders which helped her explain some of the destructive choices made by some of her six children. There are occasional digressions to discuss crochet patterns, muffins and small grandchildren, but overall each session brings her closer to the answers she has sought all her life. The panic attacks have all but disappeared and now she knows how to manage them when they do occur.

**"SUDDENLY, HERE WAS A PATIENT WHO IN HER MID-70S, AND AFTER A DIFFICULT LIFE, HAD FOUND TIME AND OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HER ANXIETY DISORDER".**

Patients have choice with the MHNIP scheme. They can accept a referral from their GP or self-refer. They can come whenever they like for as long as they like. There is flexibility in appointments which do not all have to take place at the practice. Even if their condition is no longer acute, the relationship continues.

**ANNA TRELOAR** IS A MHNIP NURSE AT INTEGRAL HEALTH ARMIDALE IN NSW

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