Participatory action research: relevance and use for contemporary nursing research

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Abstract
This paper will demonstrate how, using a collaborative, inclusive research methodology, positive impacts on clinical practice and enhanced client outcomes can be achieved.

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Participatory Action Research: 
Relevance and Use for Contemporary Nursing Research

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Participatory Action Research

- A method where creating a positive social change is the driving force

- Roots in social and educational research

- One of the few research methods that embraces:
  - participation and reflection
  - Empowerment and emancipation of groups seeking to improve a social situation
Using PAR in Nursing

- A useful approach for clinicians because it is:
  - transformative, empowering, straightforward and rigorous
The Approach

- Reflection (look)
- Planning (think)
- Action (act)
- Observation (evaluate)

- Intra-dependent
- Follow each other in a spiral or cycle
A real life nursing application

BACKGROUND:

• Paediatric unit located 630ks north of Brisbane

• Outpatient CYMHS service only (8:30 – 4pm: Mon – Fri)

• MH admissions:
  • almost doubled in the last 5 years
  • significant increase of self harming behaviour
Study Aims:

• To create a paediatric ward environment that is accepting and therapeutic for children and adolescents experiencing significant mental health problems

• To address the needs of paediatric nurses in a general hospital setting in relation to mental health issues
Methods

LOOK
• Qualitative exploration
  • Focus Group 1

THINK
• Identification of FG1 themes & suggestions

ACT
• Set & achieve actions from FG1
  • Evaluate

LOOK
• Focus Group 2

ACT
• Set & achieve actions from FG2
  • Evaluate

THINK
• Identification of FG2 themes & suggestions

LOOK
• Focus Group 3

ACT
• Set & achieve actions from FG3
  • Evaluate

THINK
• Identification of FG3 themes & suggestions

Ongoing....
Reflect

Treatment approaches:

- lack of understanding of what CYMHS does
- lack of understanding what Adult MH does
- lack of understanding of what Paeds staff do
- mental illness not seen as "sickness" - not a priority (task oriented nursing in ward)
- guilt - talking is not working, staff seen as not pulling weight, talking to patients could mean deployment as staff are perceived as not busy

Disempowered:

- little input to admissions discharge
- management (notes & issues disregarded)
Reflect

Role:
• “we aren't there to provide therapy”
• “our job is not primarily to be their counsellors”
• “they might not need treatment they just want to talk”

Consistency of approach:
• setting limits/ the 'rules’
• being consistent & how this changes /staff to staff: shift to shift

The desire to do the right thing:
• staff feel unfulfilled & disappointed at the end of a shift
• worry that they have not done or said the right thing
• worry they have not given enough time
**Actions**

- Regular education sessions & support for families
- **MH pathways** added to TrendCare to allow allocation of resources
- **A/H managers** made aware of different requirements of MH patients & that talking is actually part of therapy
- Regular case meetings to review management of discharged patients
- Caseworker to give verbal handover as well as to write in chart in the morning
- Mental Health Nursing Resource collection (MHNRC) **A camcorder** - education sessions to be taped: **Information on specific disorders** added
- **Mental State Examination** cards developed for staff lanyards
- Rotations to CYMHS
- MH component added to Paediatric Unit orientation
- Development of guidelines for MH care
Positives & Challenges

**Positives**

- Paediatric nurses recognising an issue
- Grant / working wonders
- Research team (the RA Jody)
- Dissemination of results
- REAL changes
  - a better outcomes for clients who have a mental illness who are admitted to a paediatric unit
  - awareness
  - policies

**Challenges**

- Death of team member
- Illness of team members child
- Size of team (dynamics)
- Experience (novice & expert)
- Discipline approaches
- Shift work (time to participate)
- Staff turnover
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