

2019

Experts by experience sharing personal knowledge to enhance the learning of undergraduate nursing students

Caroline Picton

University of Wollongong, cjp977@uowmail.edu.au

Lorna Moxham

University of Wollongong, lmoxham@uow.edu.au

Christopher F. Patterson

University of Wollongong, cpatters@uow.edu.au

Publication Details

Picton, C., Moxham, L. & Patterson, C. (2019). Experts by experience sharing personal knowledge to enhance the learning of undergraduate nursing students. *Australian Nursing and Midwifery Journal*, 26 (6), 55.

Experts by experience sharing personal knowledge to enhance the learning of undergraduate nursing students

Abstract

The term 'experts by experience' is used to describe people who possess personal knowledge of having a mental illness and their experience of using mental health services.

Keywords

enhance, knowledge, personal, learning, sharing, nursing, experience, experts, undergraduate, students

Publication Details

Picton, C., Moxham, L. & Patterson, C. (2019). Experts by experience sharing personal knowledge to enhance the learning of undergraduate nursing students. *Australian Nursing and Midwifery Journal*, 26 (6), 55.

Experts by experience sharing personal knowledge to enhance the learning of undergraduate nursing students

By Caroline Picton, Lorna Moxham and Christopher Patterson

The term 'experts by experience' is used to describe people who possess personal knowledge of having a mental illness and their experience of using mental health services (Curran, Sayers & Percy-Smith 2015).

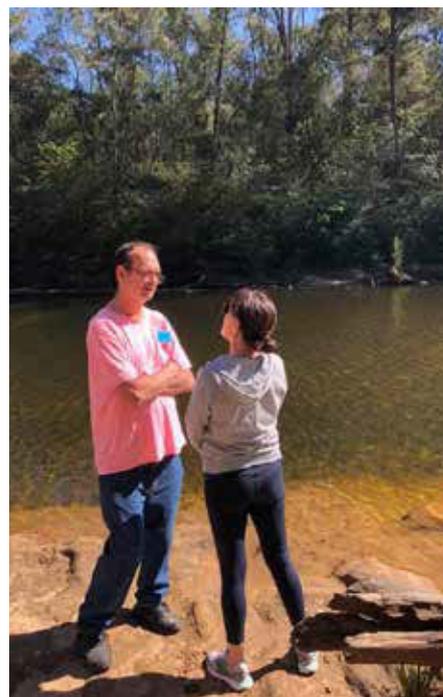
People who are experts by experience are now using their unique knowledge of mental health to assist with the learning of Bachelor of Nursing students. As part of their education, nursing students attend the purposely structured and immersive mental health placement, known as *Recovery Camp*, for 5-days and 4-nights. *Recovery Camp* offers a recovery focussed program for nursing students to participate together with people with a mental illness in recreation activities devised to promote mental health, social engagement and physical activity. The group activities are designed to challenge individuals to extend themselves as well as offering a relaxed social milieu to facilitate the sharing of personal insights. One session intentionally focuses on people who are experts by experience freely sharing their insights on mental health with nursing students.

A PhD qualitative study, examined the perspectives of 25 people with a mental illness (n=25) who participated at *Recovery Camp*.

The findings highlighted a sense of meaningful purpose from sharing their personal insights with nursing students.

Using a phenomenological approach to analyse the narrative data, five elements related to sharing personal expertise with nursing students were identified. These elements are:

1. to be heard;
2. telling it like it is;
3. reducing the power imbalance;
4. boosted self-esteem; and
5. optimism.



All participants described that when sharing their knowledge, they valued the opportunity to be heard, and to be able to tell it like it is from their perspective. In sharing their stories, participants described they had challenged the students' perceptions surrounding having a mental illness and the stigma that exists. Participants described experiencing a more balance of power that would normally exist between themselves and health clinicians, which boosted their self-esteem. Finally, a sense of optimism was described culminating with an overall theme of a deep sense of purpose from their contribution to student learning.

The following quotation from Rory, one of the study's participants, represents the sense of empowerment that was expressed and why participants believe opportunities at *Recovery Camp* make a difference.

I think the camp does make it easier for them [students sic] to listen and take on board our stories and be better nurses because they understand us more. Because of the connections and bonds we already have formed and the large amount of time we have spent together listening, chatting and communicating. I think they will be touched by our stories and our lives. The nursing students here at the camps are going to be, in 10 years' time, in the front line making those decisions about the care [...]. It is empowering for me to have this chance to do this. It is incredible really that we do get the chance to make a difference. I am very optimistic for change (Rory; lines 237-250).

The study's findings suggest that *Recovery Camp*, as an atypical and immersive clinical placement, benefit people with a mental illness who described feeling empowered when purposely contributing their expertise of mental health recovery to enhance student learning.

Reference

Curran, T., Sayers, R. and Percy-Smith, B. 2015. Leadership as experts by experience in professional education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 186(1): 624-629.

Authors

Caroline Picton, RN, BN (Hons), PhD candidate, University of Wollongong

Lorna Moxham, PhD, RN, MHN, BHSc, Professor of Mental Health Nursing, Global Challenge Lead; University of Wollongong

Christopher Patterson, RN, BN (Hons), PhD candidate, MNursing (Mental Health), Lecturer, Subject Coordinator (undergraduate and post-graduate), University of Wollongong