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2014

Building clinical confidence and skills: a placement with a difference

Lorna Moxham

University of Wollongong, lmoxham@uow.edu.au

Shane Pegg

University of Queensland

Susan Liersch

University of Wollongong, sliersch@uow.edu.au

Dana Perlman

University of Wollongong, dperlman@uow.edu.au

Renee Brighton

University of Wollongong, reeneb@uow.edu.au

See next page for additional authors

Publication Details

Moxham, L., Pegg, S., Liersch, S., Perlman, D., Brighton, R., Patterson, C. & Taylor, E. (2014). Building clinical confidence and skills: a placement with a difference. University of Wollongong:

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Building clinical confidence and skills: a placement with a difference

Abstract

Overview of a Global Challenges funded project.

Disciplines

Medicine and Health Sciences | Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Authors

Lorna Moxham, Shane Pegg, Susan Liersch, Dana Perlman, Renee Brighton, Christopher Patterson, and Ellie K. Taylor

Recovery Camp Story – ANMJ

Author Details –

Names: Prof Lorna Moxham, Dr Shane Pegg, Dr Susan Sumskis, Dr Dana Perlman, Renee Brighton, Chris Patterson, Ellie Taylor

Please forward all correspondence to Prof Lorna Moxham, as per below details.

Address: Building 41, School of Nursing & Midwifery, University of Wollongong, Northfields Ave, Wollongong 2522

Phone Number: 4239 2559

Email Address: lmoxham@uow.edu.au

Present Position: Professor of Mental Health Nursing & Leader; Living Well, Longer, UOW Global Challenges Programme.

Qualifications: RN, RPN, PhD (CQU), MED(UNSW), BHSc(UWS), DAS(Nsg)(MIHE), Grad Cert OH&S(CQU), Grad CERT Qual Mgmt(CQU), Cert IV Training & assessment (CQIT), FACMHN, FACON

Building Clinical Confidence and Skills: A Placement With a Difference

The location and duration of clinical placements impact upon student learning and clinical confidence (Chuan & Barnett 2012). However, mental health clinical placements are scarce and typically situated within in-patient settings where consumers are acutely unwell.

A team at the University of Wollongong, led by Professor Moxham, developed a 5-day immersive program called Recovery Camp addressing the need for quality mental health clinical placements. Recovery Camp – the first of its kind in Australia – is strengths-focused and individualised, facilitating personal recovery.

The camp occurs each May near Richmond, NSW. People with lived experience of mental illness attend, with therapeutic recreation and social connectedness the focus. Consisting of mindfulness activities like Tai Chi, and challenges like rock climbing and alpine rescue, the week is rewarding. Future health professionals, like nursing and psychology students, also attend. The interdisciplinary mix reflects real-world, collaborative, holistic practice.

In 2014, nursing students who attended Recovery Camp ($n = 20$; $M = 30.65$ years, $SD = 10.49$; 17 females) were compared to students who undertook a 'traditional' mental health clinical placement ($n = 19$; $M = 30.53$ years; $SD = 11.81$; 17 females). The 7-item Social Distance Scale (SDS) (Bogardus 1925) was used to capture perceptions about people with mental illness.

A repeated measures ANOVA demonstrated that, for Nursing students who attended Recovery Camp, the difference in self-reported social distance from pre-camp ($M = 13.75$, $SD = 3.54$), to post-camp ($M = 11.05$, $SD = 3.83$), and at follow-up ($M = 11.30$, $SD = 2.16$) was statistically significant, $F(1, 19) = 9.18$, $p = .001$.

Findings demonstrated Recovery Camp involvement significantly reduced stigma amongst nursing students. This effect was maintained at 3-month follow-up and was not evident for the comparison group. The value of active, immersive interaction with consumers who are living in the community is clear.

David Pritchard, a student who attended camp in 2013 who now works as a Mental Health Nurse, stated:

“I look back to the Recovery Camp and can utilise what I learnt into my practice in a way that improves my practice, makes me a better nurse and provides more individualised and holistic care.”

Sponsorship is currently being sought. For information, please contact Ellie Taylor
elliejo@uow.edu.au

References

Bogardus, E.S. 1925. Measuring social distances. *Journal of Applied Sociology*. 1-2: 216-226.

Chuan, O.L. and Barnett, T. 2012. Student, tutor and staff nurse perceptions of the clinical learning environment. *Nurse Education in Practice*. 12(4): 192-197.

Word count: 400 words

Photograph:



Caption: *University of Wollongong Nursing, Psychology and Dietetics students create lasting memories on a 5-day therapeutic recreation camp with people living with a mental illness.*

All participants have given their written consent for photographs to be shared publicly.