Watering the seeds of holistic care: a case study of an intRAdisciplinary immersive mental health clinical placement

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In 2013, a team of mental health nursing academics established a unique mental health clinical placement called Recovery Camp. Three years later, the placement continues. Over this time, the knowledge tree that has grown has been shaped, pruned and evaluated. In addition, the ‘gardeners,’ also known as the investigatory team who provide leadership, has been expanded.

This paper explores how the seeds of holistic person-centred care are watered through involvement in an innovative mental health clinical placement. The authors assert that despite every attempt to ensure it doesn’t happen, care becomes compartmentalised due to the ‘system.’ The system, though, is made up of people and by reframing the minds of people the ‘system’ can be altered.

Professional enculturation related to the concept of holism needs to happen during undergraduate education. To affect this, nursing, psychology, dietetics and exercise physiology students go away for 5 days into the Australian bush, with 30 people who have a serious and enduring mental illness. Among many objectives, this clinical placement aims to help students understand that compartmentalising care is the least effective means of working toward effective health care outcomes.

This case study of intRAdisciplinary learning experience using therapeutic recreation as the theoretical framework illustrates how students can be empowered to embed holistic approach care into their epistemologies.