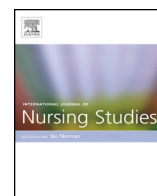




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Review

Culturally and linguistically diverse healthcare students' experiences of learning in a clinical environment: A systematic review of qualitative studies



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ABSTRACT

Context: Learning in the clinical environment of healthcare students plays a significant part in higher education. The greatest challenges for culturally and linguistically diverse healthcare students were found in clinical placements, where differences in language and culture have been shown to cause learning obstacles for students. There has been no systematic review conducted to examine culturally and linguistically diverse healthcare students' experiences of their learning in the clinical environment.

Objective: This systematic review aims to identify culturally and linguistically diverse healthcare students' experiences of learning in a clinical environment.

Methods: The search strategy followed the guidelines of the Centre of Reviews and Dissemination. The original studies were identified from seven databases (CINAHL, Medline Ovid, Scopus, Web of Science, Academic Search Premiere, Eric and Cochrane Library) for the period 2000–2014. Two researchers selected studies based on titles, abstracts and full texts using inclusion criteria and assessed the quality of studies independently. Twelve original studies were chosen for the review.

Results: The culturally and linguistically diverse healthcare students' learning experiences were divided into three influential aspects of learning in a clinical environment: experiences with implementation processes and provision; experiences with peers and mentors; and experiences with university support and instructions. The main findings indicate that culturally and linguistically diverse healthcare students embarking on clinical placements initially find integration stressful. Implementing the process of learning in a clinical environment requires additional time, well prepared pedagogical orientation, prior cultural and language education, and support for students and clinical staff. Barriers to learning by culturally and linguistically diverse healthcare students were not being recognized and individuals were not considered motivated; learners experienced the strain of being different, and faced language difficulties. Clinical staff attitudes influenced students' clinical learning experiences and outcomes.

Conclusion: Additional education in culture and language for students and clinical staff is considered essential to improve the clinical learning experiences of culturally and

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linguistically diverse healthcare students. Further studies of culturally and linguistically diverse healthcare students' learning experiences in the clinical environment need to be conducted in order to examine influential aspects on the clinical learning found in the review.

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What is already known about the topic?

- Globalization has enhanced the internationalization of labor and education.
- Cultural and linguistic difficulties cause problems when clinical practice is included in healthcare education.
- When the context is not culturally or linguistically diverse, pedagogical atmosphere and supervision are often considered to be important in clinical education.
- In healthcare education, cultural and linguistic issues of clinical practice are little researched.

What this paper adds

- Integration into a clinical environment requires time, education and preparation of culturally and linguistically diverse healthcare students and their mentors.
- Prior education in communication and culture improved culturally and linguistically diverse students' experiences in learning during clinical practice.
- Students staying in a foreign country for longer periods of time experienced more discrimination and social isolation than students staying for shorter periods.
- A positive clinical environment helped culturally and linguistically diverse students to overcome language and cultural barriers and resulted in a positive learning experience.

1. Introduction

Higher education students of healthcare exhibit increasing cultural and linguistic diversity as the labor market expands and knowledge and cultural experiences are shared more widely (Parker and McMillan, 2007). Internationalization is part of the globalization process, with increasing mobility worldwide (Parker and McMillan, 2007). It has been estimated that, in 2010, 215 million people were living outside their birth country (Bhopal, 2014). Thus, internationalization within higher education and the labor market has been a goal of many western governments (Ministry of Education, 2009).

A culturally and linguistically diverse learning environment in healthcare offers unique insights and a variety of approaches to learning (Brown, 2008), while bringing challenges associated with cross-cultural differences and tensions (Parker and McMillan, 2007). The greatest challenges in international healthcare education have been the cultural and linguistic difficulties associated with clinical education (Crawford and Candlin, 2013; Edgecombe et al., 2013; Pitkääjärvi et al., 2013).

In a study exploring the clinical learning experience of nursing students in nine western European countries

(Warne et al., 2010) it was shown that pedagogical atmosphere and supervisory relationship had a significant role in students' experiences of clinical learning. In a study of international students' experiences in clinical placements (Pitkääjärvi et al., 2013), staff members' attitudes have been shown to influence students' experiences both positively when they are welcoming or negatively when they are discouraging.

Cultural and linguistic diversity is closely linked to the concept of internationalization. In this study, culturally and linguistically diverse students include those whose first language and culture is not of the country they study in, in other words they differ from the mainstream culture and language (Robinson and Clardy, 2011) and can be further defined as a minority group (Akombo, 2013; Terry and Irving, 2010). Culturally and linguistically diverse students can, additionally, be identified as international students coming to study a healthcare field in a foreign country. The focus of this systematic review was nursing, midwifery and physical therapy undergraduate students.

Learning in a clinical environment involves application, development and integration of theoretical knowledge, skills, and professional activities by a healthcare undergraduate student with the involvement of a mentor and clinical staff and nurse teachers from universities (Bjork et al., 2014; Newton et al., 2010). The clinical environment in this study is regarded as a learning environment for healthcare education, involving clinical education in clinical settings where a student is taught practical skills relating to real working situations (FINHEEC, 2012a, 2012b).

Clinical learning is a key part of healthcare education; however, the aspects that affect culturally and linguistically diverse students tend not to have been considered systematically. A broader perspective is required. The aim of this study was to identify culturally and linguistically diverse healthcare students' experiences of learning in a clinical environment.

The research question associated with our systematic review was:

- What kind of learning experiences do culturally and linguistically diverse healthcare students encounter in a clinical environment?

2. Methods

2.1. Information sources and search strategy

The guidelines of the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD, 2009) were used to ensure that the study was robust. Research was identified from seven different

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