



Reflections From Dutch Advanced Nursing Practice Students on Psychiatric Mental Healthcare in the United States



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ABSTRACT

Background: An international clinical learning experience is a unique opportunity to witness another nursing and healthcare system. The Master of Advanced Nursing Practice (MANP) program at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands, mandates an international experience.

Methods: Semi-structured qualitative interviews, a focus group session and written reflections were used for data collection with 6 Dutch MANP nursing students who specialized in psychiatric mental healthcare.

Results: Five major themes were revealed from the data. The themes identified were as follows: (1) pride and passion for mental health profession (2) role diversity within psychiatric mental health nursing (3) nursing leadership at the organization level (4) comparable Westernized approaches to mental healthcare and (5) differences in access to care.

Implications for Nursing Practice: Incorporating a mandatory international clinical experience is a beneficial tool to promote a global understanding of the unique advanced practice nursing student's academic and professional development.

Conclusions: The international clinical learning experience is considered a highlight of the 2-year MANP program. The students are able to gain a new and broader vision of the APN role and a greater appreciation for the Dutch healthcare system.

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An integral and essential aspect of nursing education is the clinical learning experience component. It provides nursing students with opportunities to gain professional knowledge and skills to perform in the professional situations (Chesser-Smyth, 2005). As a practice-based profession, clinical education is essential part of a nursing curriculum. Clinical placements provide students the opportunity to experience nursing in the real world and enables students to apply theory into practice situations (Elliot, 2002). The success of any nursing program is based on the effectiveness of the clinical experience (Pearcey & Elliot, 2004). Following the move of nursing education into higher education in Europe and elsewhere in the world, opportunities for students' international clinical experiences have increased globally (Green, Johansson, Rosser, Tengnah, & Segrott, 2008). International clinical learning experiences provide a unique opportunity to witness healthcare challenges within another healthcare system and how those challenges are managed. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (1996), suggested the need for global health as an element for core knowledge in baccalaureate and graduate education in understanding diversity. Global health is necessary to deliver culturally sensitive care and provide nursing students with tools required to increase their nursing knowledge in the context of a new healthcare system. An international clinical learning experience provides the opportunity to observe

nursing care that is embedded in a healthcare system different from their own in order to gain understanding of the complex dynamics of the system.

INTERNATIONAL NURSING EXCHANGES IN MENTAL HEALTH

Although there are innumerable studies over international nursing experiences, there is lack of articles over international nursing experiences within psychiatric–mental health (PMH) nursing. An article written by Brooks (1999) described an international experience for American psychiatric–mental health nurses to the United Kingdom. The goal of the exchange was to visit another institution, observe and participate in their therapeutic environment, and examine the role of the nurse within psychiatric care. Another article by Craman (1992) examined the impact of a visiting South African psychiatric mental health nurse while working in a mental health facility in the US. Her impact on the mental health facility promoted an environment of sharing problems and solutions. An article by Maas, Ezeobebe, and Tetteroo (2012) described the development of an international psychiatric mental health partnership between the Netherlands and the United States (US). This article revealed the value of international nursing visitors to discuss and share knowledge and other perspectives on PMH nursing.

Limited articles were available regarding advanced practice nursing students who participated in an international clinical experience.

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Ailinger, Zamora, Molloy, and Benavides (2000) describe the clinical experience of final semester nurse practitioner (NP) students from the US who participated in a 2-week intensive program in Nicaragua. The students' clinical experiences included working in a clinic within an impoverished community in Nicaragua. The findings revealed that the students gained a helicopter view to the social, political, and economic factors that impact healthcare. Tang (2007) described a Chinese NP in-service program that provided clinical visits at American healthcare facilities. The experience helped the students gain a global vision on healthcare. ter Maten and Garcia-Maas (2009) examined a group of Dutch advanced nursing practice students and its impact on professional development during a short-term international experience to the US. The students felt more confident of themselves following the international exchange and gained a greater appreciation of similar healthcare challenges.

Master's in Advanced Nursing Practice at Rotterdam University

The Master in Advance Nursing Practice (MANP) degree has been offered in the Netherlands since 1997. Since 2004, Rotterdam University (RU) of Applied Sciences has offered a Master in Advance Nursing Practice (MANP) degree which offers nursing students the opportunity to continue career and academic mobility within this relatively new nursing role.

Research Aim

The purpose of this study is to explore the Dutch advanced practice nurse (APN) students' international experiences while in a 1-week intensive clinical exchange in a US psychiatric mental healthcare facility with advanced practice psychiatric nurses. The following research question was addressed in this study:

1. How does the American psychiatric mental advance practice nursing and healthcare system differ from the Dutch healthcare system?

METHODS

Research Design and Methodology

A qualitative descriptive approach was chosen for this study as it allowed the students an opportunity to describe their international experience from psychiatric mental health settings in the US. The study employed the followings: (1) 30 minute semi-structured interviews to give primacy to students' own perspectives and, to the uniqueness of their individual experience (Creswell, 1998) until data saturation was achieved (Polit & Beck, 2004), (2) a 45 minute focus group, and (3) students were given 2 weeks to reflect and document their international psychiatric experience. The time is necessary because it allows the students to critically analyze the US international personal experience upon return to the Netherlands.

Theoretical Framework

This qualitative study was framed within the constructivist paradigm and methodological approach recognizing those students' accounts of their learning experiences in which the aim of inquiry was to understand and reformulate the perceptions that people initially hold (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The aim is towards consensus, but new interpretations are welcome. Constructivist perspective senses that knowledge is created by people and influenced by their values and culture (Sanner, Wilson, & Samson, 2002). Nursing education has been focused toward the simple communication of information and methods for processing information. This type of knowledge has important implications for nursing faculty and the focus tends to shift from teacher to the students. The teacher functions as a facilitator who helps the students develop and assess

their understanding of their learning. The students think of knowledge not as inert factoids to be memorized, but as a dynamic, ever-changing view of the world we live in and, the ability to successfully stretch and explore that view. It helps us look at how people construct understandings of the worlds (Brooks, 1999).

Setting and Sample

The setting for the study was at both inpatient and outpatient PMH settings located in a large metropolitan city in southwestern US. A convenient sample was used for this study. Six Dutch mental health NP students who were on a short term exchange program in the US, participated in the study. Prior to the start of the international experience, the students were informed that a study will be conducted to explore their experience within the American health care system. Participation was voluntary and refusal to participate will not affect the students' grade or progression in the program. The participants' age ranged from 28 to 44 years with 7 to 19 years' experience as a registered nurse (RN). The participants' educational level was a baccalaureate degree in nursing with a sub-specialty in psychiatric-mental health nursing. The participants' consist of five females and one male. The six students ($N = 6$) were supported for this program via the Netherlands government scholarships. The students participated in a clinical rotation for 1 week with an American advanced practice mental health nurses. The Dutch students were accompanied by 3 nursing faculty members. Only 1 student had been to the US prior to the international experience. The ethical approval for the study was obtained by the Academics Manager of RU. Participants were informed that participation in the study is voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. All students signed an informed consent prior to participation.

Data Collection

An international clinical rotation exchange program was planned for 1 week which includes visits to a private mental health outpatient clinic and an in-patient psychiatric unit at a general hospital and, concluding with rotations at a large mental health care hospital. The researchers used three methods to collect data: (1) 30 minutes individual interviews (2) 45 minute focus group interview which was conducted on the last day of clinical rotation and (3) written reflections submitted 2 weeks after the international experience. After reviewing the responses from the individual interviews, focus group discussion and written reflections, common themes were revealed and summarized.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used for data analysis. Content analysis uses the content of narrative data to identify prominent themes and patterns (Polit & Beck, 2004). A theme is an idea or concept that is implicit in and recurrent throughout the data. Themes are not concrete; rather, they are the underlying ideas behind the words. Qualitative data analysis seeks to categorize and understand the data and the relationships among the categories to eventually conceptualize the data into themes. Once themes were identified, data saturation occurred early in the analysis. Data saturation in qualitative research is the point at which all new information collected is redundant of information already collected (Macnee & McCabe, 2014).

Analysis of the reflective reports involved line-by-line scrutiny of texts with key words being assigned to text fragments. The reflective reports revealed common themes. For further clarity of the reflective reports, the researchers met with the students on one-on-one to discuss with the students as necessary. Member checking with participants was carried out informally as data were being collected, and more formally after data have been fully examined (Polit & Beck, 2004). The researchers' use of combination of individual interviews, focus group and

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