



Factors impacting on psychological wellbeing of international students in the health professions: A scoping review



Lisa McKenna^{a,b}, Eddie Robinson^b, Joy Penman^b, Danny Hills^{c,*}

^a Head, School of Nursing and Midwifery, La Trobe University, Bundoora VIC 3086, Australia

^b Nursing and Midwifery, Monash University Clayton, VIC 3800, Australia

^c Nursing and Midwifery, Monash University, Wellington Road, Clayton, VIC 3800, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Health profession
International student
Psychological wellbeing
Scoping review

ABSTRACT

Background: There are increasing numbers of international students undertaking health professional courses, particularly in Western countries. These courses not only expose students to the usual stresses and strains of academic learning, but also require students to undertake clinical placements and practice-based learning. While much is known about general issues facing international students, less is known about factors that impact on those studying in the health professions.

Objectives: To explore what is known about factors that influence the psychological wellbeing of international students in the health professions.

Design: A scoping review.

Data sources: A range of databases were searched, including CINAHL, Medline, Scopus, Proquest and ERIC, as well as grey literature, reference lists and Google Scholar.

Review methods: The review included qualitative or quantitative primary peer reviewed research studies that focused on international undergraduate or postgraduate students in the health professions. The core concept underpinning the review was psychological issues, with the outcome being psychological and/or social well-being. Thematic analysis across studies was used to identify key themes emerging.

Results: A total of 13 studies were included in the review, from the disciplines of nursing, medicine and speech-language pathology. Four key factor groups emerged from the review: negotiating structures and systems, communication and learning, quality of life and self-care, and facing discrimination and social isolation.

Conclusions: International health professional students face similar issues to other international students. The nature of their courses, however, also requires negotiating different health care systems, and managing a range of clinical practice issues including with communication, and isolation and discrimination from clinical staff and patients. Further research is needed to specifically explore factors impacting on student well-being and how international students can be appropriately prepared and supported for their encounters.

What is already known about the topic?

- University students are confronted with numerous academic and life challenges but, for international students, the stresses and strains of everyday student life are compounded.
- While there is a body of evidence relating to issues facing the well-being of international students, less is known about factors that impact on those studying in the health professions.

What this paper adds

- This review identifies additional issues impacting on the

psychosocial wellbeing of international health profession students, including to function in unfamiliar health care systems, and communicate verbally and non-verbally in culturally appropriate and effective ways.

- The review consequently highlights the need for research into the most effective interventions to address the key issues and concerns for these students.

1. Introduction

In today's competitive information-driven global economy, possessing a tertiary qualification is significant. Higher education offers

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: danny.hills@monash.edu, danny.j.hills@gmail.com (D. Hills).

graduates many advantages, such as increase of knowledge and skills, expansion of social networks, improvement of employment opportunities and earning potential, better quality of life, greater access to health care and longer life expectancy (Allen, 2007; Strawiński, 2011). Advantages for the wider community include a more efficient economy and equitable society (Baum et al., 2013), less dependency on government assistance, and greater community service and leadership (Allen, 2007).

Participation in higher education is determined by interrelated dynamics, including economic, sociocultural, educational, gender and family (Maani, 2006; Maaz and Watermann, 2007; Andres and Adamuti-Trache, 2008; Ashby and Schoon, 2010). In addition to demographic profiles and finances, Wilks and Wilson (2012) highlight geographic location as a determinant in higher education participation. Students may opt to travel abroad for their higher education, and concerns such as safety, university rankings, scholarships and finances are important considerations (Gong and Huybers, 2015).

An individual's decision to pursue tertiary education in another country has been a subject of interest for more than a decade, with a significant rise of international students being observed in developed countries across the world. In 2012, more than five million students travelled abroad for education, double the number from 2005 (OECD, 2015). Across the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, 6% of tertiary students in 2014 were international students (18% or more for Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom), with 53% coming from Asia (OECD, 2016).

University students are confronted with numerous academic and life challenges. Studies have shown resulting moderate to high levels of psychological stress and distress in general undergraduate students (Cooke et al., 2004; Eisenberg et al., 2007; Stallman, 2010). Psychological stress and distress have also been identified in pre-registration nursing students (Labrague et al., 2016) and medical students (Iqbal et al., 2015; Ludwig et al., 2015), who experience the additional stresses and strains associated with clinical placements, and developing and utilising critical clinical and clinical reasoning skills.

Being an international student likely compounds the stresses and strains of everyday student life. More than 25 years ago, in Australia, Burns (1991) raised the alarm that international students experienced more stress than their local counterparts. Factors such as language, culture, social support and financial capacity impact on their academic performance as well as their health and wellbeing. Sawir et al. (2008) describe international students as having three types of loneliness – personal, through lost contact with families; social, through the loss of networks; and cultural, due to the need to adopt the culture and language of the host country. Additional stressors include racism (Iwamoto and Liu, 2010), discrimination (Jung et al., 2010), expectation gaps between students and academics (Kingston and Forland, 2008), burnout (Ishak et al., 2013), clinical placement experiences and expectations (Alzayyat and Al-Gamal, 2014), and culture or transition shock (McLachlan and Justice, 2009).

While key mental health and well-being concerns for international undergraduate students have been identified, factors impacting on the mental health and well-being of international students enrolled in health degree courses, such as in nursing, medicine and allied health, have yet to be fully determined. Consequently, this scoping study was undertaken to examine the extent and range of evidence-based research on factors impacting on the psychosocial well-being of international students enrolled in health degree studies. In mapping and synthesising the knowledge available, an exploration and preparation for further research can be facilitated (Peters et al., 2015).

2. Methods

2.1. Aim

This review sought to examine what is known about the

psychological well-being of international students enrolled in health profession courses, in particular, to answer the question: What factors impacting on psychosocial well-being have been reported in international students in the health professions? The purpose of the review was to identify existing research on the topic, and identify areas of need for future research aimed at enhancing support for international students. A scoping review protocol was developed, informed by The Joanna Briggs Institute, *Methodology for JBI Scoping Reviews* (Peters et al., 2015).

2.2. Inclusion criteria

2.2.1. Types of participants

For this review, we included studies that focused on international undergraduate or postgraduate students in the health professions.

2.2.2. Concept

The core concept underpinning the review was psychological issues, with the outcome being psychological and/or social wellbeing.

2.2.3. Context

The context for the review was that of being an international student.

2.2.4. Types of sources

The review included qualitative or quantitative primary, peer reviewed research studies. Review articles were not included, but reference lists were checked for additional sources.

2.3. Search strategy

A range of databases were searched, including CINAHL, Medline, Scopus, Proquest and ERIC using the keywords 'psychological' or 'social' and 'wellbeing' and 'international' or 'overseas'; 'student' and 'health care'. The search was limited to full text papers; published in English; between the years 2007 and 2016. In addition; grey literature; reference lists and the search engine Google Scholar were searched for additional missed papers.

2.4. Selection and extraction

Across the five databases, a total of 455 abstracts were sourced. Two additional records were identified through the grey literature. Following removal of duplicates, 450 records remained. Titles were screened for relevance, leaving 97 for further review. Of these, 27 were considered directly related to the research question and full texts were reviewed. A further 14 were removed at this point following application of inclusion criteria, leaving a total of 13 papers for the final review (Fig. 1). Data were extracted in order to include important criteria including: country of study origin, study design and purpose, sample, method, main findings and limitations. Inductive thematic analysis, informed by the work of Braun and Cohen (2012) across studies was used to identify key themes emerging. This entailed familiarisation with the findings of each study and generating initial codes. These codes were then searched for emerging themes which were reviewed and refined to arrive at the final themes reported in the paper.

3. Results

Across the 13 included studies (Table 1), five were conducted in Australia, three in the United Kingdom, two in the USA, one in New Zealand, one in Finland, and one combined across Australia and New Zealand. The majority of studies (nine) were from nursing, with three from medicine and one from speech-language pathology. The design and focus of the studies varied. Seven were qualitative explorations, three quantitative and three mixed methods designs. Ten studies

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5120980>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5120980>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)