

# LINKING LEARNERS FOR LIFE WHERE THEY LIVE (L<sup>4</sup>): DEVELOPING A GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



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This article describes a graduate student learning experience as part of an international nursing collaborative working together to develop an academic partnership for global health education in the circumpolar north. The experience provided an opportunity to conduct a pilot project in a rural, remote, northern community using an indigenous, global context. Building on the Canadian–Siberian collaboration, the graduate student attended an academic institution in Siberia, where she focused on the sharing of expertise, knowledge, and insights in order to address the challenges facing indigenous people in achieving optimal health and well-being in the circumpolar north. The goal was to create a foundation for “putting health into place” in a northern context, with the hope of creating shared learning opportunities for undergraduate students between the 2 countries. The intent is to share the approach used by the graduate student to use a conceptual model to assess the feasibility of creating a context-relevant global health experience for northern nursing education. (Index words: Global health; Circumpolar; Indigenous; Local–Global; Conceptual framework; Communities; Therapeutic landscape) J Prof Nurs 31:359–364, 2015. © 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Inc. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

THERE IS A growing interest in university-level initiatives that support student learning and enhance the understanding of global health (Koplan et al., 2009). According to the World Health Organization (2013), health is considered a fundamental human right; and therefore, the attainment of global health is “...a socially desirable objective, actually a primary objective, on which to focus” (p.2). To address this objective, undergraduate nursing education often includes study

abroad programs, international student clinical practicums, exchange programs, service–learning, and global health initiatives (Kulbok, Mitchell, Glick, & Greiner, 2012). In North America, the accreditation process for many undergraduate nursing programs requires evidence of strategies to support student learning in cultural competency most commonly met through international student practicum experiences. Such experiences are often insightful and life changing for individuals, yet may not be situated within an overarching global health education strategy.

A recent systematic review of the literature on global health experiences in nursing education suggests that although future graduates will undoubtedly care for patients and families from diverse cultural backgrounds (whether practicing at home or abroad), international learning experiences that are part of a university curriculum are limited, rarely conceptually grounded, and lack formal evaluation (Kulbok et al., 2012). Similar findings have been reported by McAuliffe and Cohen (2005), whose

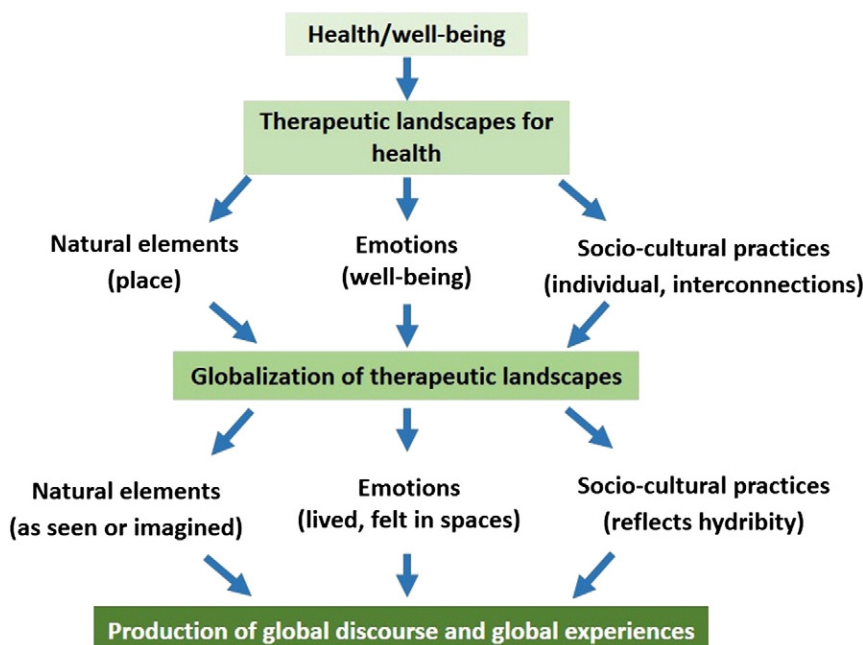
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**Figure 1.** Source: Hoyes (2007) From Rishikesh to Yogaville: The globalization of therapeutic landscapes. In Williams, A. (Ed.) *Geographies of Health: Therapeutic Landscapes*. Reproduced with permission by Ashgate Publishing Company.

experience in the area spans more than 30 years. International student experiences are expensive, often limiting participation to students who can independently fund a study-abroad experience (Calhoone, Wildcat, Annett, Pierotti, & Giswold, 2003). To adequately address the gaps in providing global health education, a more visionary and inclusive approach to redesigning interprofessional health science education is needed.

In 2007, the American Academy of Nurses recommended that international student experiences within the United States be replaced by global health initiatives (Rosenkoetter & Nardi, 2007). Leffers and Mitchell (2011) consider collaboration and partnerships as core constructs in creating a global health strategy and suggest that global partnerships be built based on an engaged process of mutual goal setting, team work, and capacity building with shared participation between the host and home countries. Foundational principles of global initiatives should include “cultural bridging, cross cultural communication, mutual respect and mutual learning” (Leffers & Mitchell, 2011, p. 95). To become more locally responsive and yet globally connected in knowledge mobilization for best practices, Frenk et al. (2010) appeal to both the health and education systems to acknowledge the interdependence necessary to achieve positive outcomes for global health. A redesign for new instructional and institutional ways of learning involves transformative learning to not only acquire new knowledge and skills but also to socialize students in a global context and develop attributes of leadership that are globally relevant and applicable (Frenk et al., 2010). Others suggest that a pedagogical shift in conceptual thinking, moving from content to process thinking, is needed in order to link teachings with culture, community, and ways of knowing to achieve a broader perspective beyond western views (Stansfield & Browne, 2013).

This article describes a graduate student learning experience as part of an international nursing collaborative working together to develop an academic partnership for global health education in the circumpolar north. The intent is to share the approach used by the graduate student to use a conceptual model to assess the feasibility of creating an undergraduate student practicum as part of the collaboration.

## Background

Historically, the college of nursing at the University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon, Canada) provided an international student placement program as part of the final-year senior practicum. The approach of the college of nursing to international placements was predicated on the assumptions that these experiences added value and understanding for individual students and achieved cultural competence that was transferable across cultural groups. As the college of nursing began to challenge these past assumptions, a global health strategy was created as part of its strategic plan in 2011. The principles of the global health strategy included health equity, diversity, community and inclusiveness, and mutually beneficial, reciprocal, and respectful relationships. Foci included rural, remote, northern, and indigenous health equity, promoting culture and community within our local campuses, including providing adequate supports to aboriginal, international, and new Canadian students (Kulbok et al., 2012). Examining how the selection of host countries could align with the strategic direction of the college and the research expertise of faculty was a fundamental principle in supporting such experiences. Given the cultural context of Saskatchewan, as described below, it became clear that creating a global health experience would need to reflect the college of nursing's strategic plan and consider the influences

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