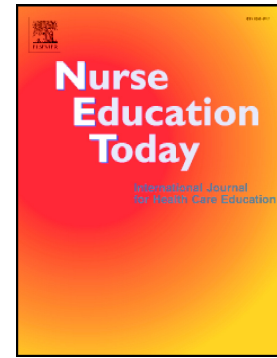


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AN INVESTIGATION OF PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY IN PRE-REGISTRATION NURSE EDUCATION: A MODIFIED GROUNDED THEORY RESEARCH STUDY

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Abstract

Background Acting with integrity is a central part of nursing practice. However, literature shows that professional integrity can be absent and where this is present it can face challenges. Governmental Inquiries have revealed deficits in the expression of nursing values which underpin professional integrity, in particular caring, compassionate and competent practice that maintains the dignity of patients. Evidence also suggests that it cannot be taken for granted that pre-registration education will have a positive impact on student nurses' ability to practice with integrity.

Objectives This research explored students', mentors' and lecturers' experiences of professional integrity in pre-registration nurse education.

Methodology A grounded theory approach was informed by the work of Charmaz (2004, 2006)

Context The study, which took place in a UK university, involved four fields of nursing practice: Adult, Children, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities.

Participants 12 student nurses, 5 practice-based mentors and 6 lecturers participated.

Findings Semi-structured interviews and focus groups revealed three main themes: meanings, enactment and growth of professional integrity.

Conclusions Pre-registration education can influence the growth of professional integrity by improving students' understanding of the boundaries of nursing practice and potential threats to these, skills to speak up on behalf of patients, and knowledge of the processes involved in raising concerns about practice and potential barriers to this. The proactive development of student nurses' strategies to cope, alongside increasing their understanding of the importance of this is also likely to be beneficial.

Keywords: integrity; values; genuineness; socialisation

Background

"Integrity" is commonly understood to mean soundness, honesty or unimpaired condition, deriving from the Latin for wholeness, completeness and purity (Hardingham 2004, OED 2014). Cleary and Horsfall (2013:676) interpret integrity as '...a holistic phenomenon that incorporates personal characteristics, cognition, interpersonal awareness, and practical enactment ultimately relating to matters society deems worthwhile'. Authors suggest that integrity is multifaceted and

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