

The Empathy Enigma: Does It Still Exist?

Comparison of Empathy Using Students and Standardized Actors

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Empathy

- Nursing students learn that empathy should be at the heart of all nurse-patient encounters
- Research outcomes have demonstrated that empathy declines among nursing students during the last year of their nursing program



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Simulation

- Simulation training as a strategy to prevent errors in the clinical setting
 - IOM, 1999
- Simulation can optimize outcomes of care and provide opportunities for students to participate in real life-clinical situations without posing a risk to patients
 - Durham & Alden, 2008



Debriefing

- After simulation, it is a time for the participant to reflect on the event, discuss it with others, learn, and modify behaviors as a result
 - Decker, 2007; Fanning & Gaba, 2007



Peer Evaluation

- Providing students with an opportunity to assess peers in a non-threatening environment improves their empathic behaviors, develops intra- and interpersonal skills, and develops skills that are transferable to the practice setting
 - (Boehm & Bonnel, 2010; Welsh, 2007).



Purpose

- The purpose of this study was to examine how nursing students self-report empathy before and after an intervention using SAs.

(1) “What are the changes in student self-report of empathy over time?”

(2) “What is the significance of the sample demographic characteristics and the overall score of empathy?”

(3) “What is the association of nursing students’ empathy and SAs’ assessment of student empathy?”

(4) “Were the peer assessments of student empathy similar to the SAs’ assessment of student empathy?”

(5) “What is the perception of the nursing students’ use of simulation with standardized actors as it relates to empathy and their future practice?”



Methodology

- Mixed methods: quasi-experimental and qualitative descriptive designs was used to determine the relationship between students self-report of empathy and assessment of their empathy made by SAs and peers at two points during the last two clinical courses in an undergraduate baccalaureate nursing program
- Participants
 - BSN Traditional and FACT nursing students, second year
- Intramural Funded Study
 - \$4390
 - Standardized Actors



Procedure

- IRB
- Consent - Surveys - JSE, Demographic
- Simulation
 - Students as HP
 - SA as patients or caregivers
 - Peers
- Debriefing
- Repeated in the Spring
- Post JSE



Instruments

- Jefferson Scale of Empathy - Health professional student version
- Jefferson Scale of Patient Perception of Physician Empathy
- Demographic Questionnaire
 - age, sex, program, program sequence, prior degree, experience in healthcare such as working as a nurse extern or nursing assistant, and time working in healthcare



Data Analysis/Results: RQ2

- $N=146$
- Program
 - 61% Traditional
 - 39% FACT
- Gender
 - 87% Female
- Age
 - 75% 21-29
- Race
 - 79% White
- Country of Origin
 - $n=146$ ($p<.04$)
- Hospitalization
 - $n=62$ ($p<.01$)
- Country of Origin
 - $n=126$ ($p<.01$)
- College
 - 35% <college; 44% some college
- Major
 - Science
 - $n=69$ ($p<.04$)
- Marital status
 - 69% single
- JSE
 - Male - M 103.1(Fall);111.4 (Spring)



Data Analysis/Results

- RQ1
 - I found no significant change in overall empathy scores from the **combined** cohort of traditional BSN students and FACT students between the fall and spring semesters (M/SD fall = 112.3[13.0]; M/SD spring = 114.3[11.9])
 - FACT ($p < .04$)
- JSE -HPs
 - alpha .82



Data Analysis/Results

RQ3

- The association between students' self-reported empathy and the SAs' assessment of student empathy were statistically significant (fall ($p < .01$) and in the spring ($p < .02$) which was consistent with the findings from Berg et al., (2011a)

RQ4

- The SAs' assessment of student empathy compared to the student peer assessments was significant in the fall ($p < .02$) and in the spring ($p < .04$), indicating that the peers had a significantly higher mean during both points in time



Data Analysis/Results: Debriefing

- RQ5: Thematic statements
 - “Being in their shoes”
 - “Empathy helps to support patients through difficult situations”
 - “Being understanding and nonjudgmental”
 - “Empathy needs to extend beyond the patient to the family”



Discussion

- Empathy -As healthcare becomes more focused on technology and less focused on personal interactions, it is important to keep empathy at the heart of the patient encounter
- Simulation - Nursing educators need to create approaches in order to develop empathy among students
- Debriefing - Since understanding is an essential element for the development of empathy, responses indicate that the activity had a greater impact than the measurement tools detected



Conclusion

**We need
empathy to:**

- Collaborate**
- Successfully**
- Solve Problems**
- Drive Change**
- Align Interests**
- Make Good**
- Decisions**
- Lead Effectively**



To Improve Patient Outcomes



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