

A Virtual Nursing Internship: Where Policy and Politics Matter

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Background/ Problem

- Community oriented nursing is complex
- Students:
 - Accelerated 11 month BSN Nursing Program
 - Think in linear, concrete way
 - Have community oriented clinical experiences, but cannot participate in wide range; some experiences not available
- Faculty believe Community Oriented Nursing is dynamic and exciting; students see another PowerPoint lecture



Our Solution

- Modified Problem-Based Learning experience for part of academic quarter (“Virtual Internship”)
- Class breaks into groups of ~ 5 students each; each group assigned CHN role
- Groups address assigned Public Health topic each week
- Groups report back to class



Problem-Based Learning

- Educational method that creates a compelling “need to know” in the learner
- Supports and challenges students in the learning process
- Problems are realistic and case based
- Students identify information necessary to solve the “problem”, perform the needed research and contribute the information to their peers in class
- Structure → cooperation, positive peer experience, collaboration and understanding of need for skill development.



Welcome to Killardton

- Students assigned to a “virtual internship”
- Fictitious city (named for nurse educator founders!)
- Omitted in last Census, BUT resembles closely a real city (faculty choice)
- Situations, occurrences, and opinions exist for educational purposes only and do not represent those of any existing city or town



Components of the Program

- Normal practice foci of designated nursing role
- Understanding of Killardton characteristics and integration into assessment, problem identification, proposed interventions and evaluation
- Weekly “newspaper”
- Students write and orally share “briefs” on topics selected by faculty



Windshield Survey of Killardton

	Killardton	PA	US
Median age	32	38	35.3
Race: White	83.2%	85.4%	75.1%
Black	12.7%	10%	12.3%
Hispanic	1.1%	3.2%	12.5%
H.S. grad	77%	82%	80.4%
Poverty: Family	13.7%	7.8%	9.2%
Individuals	21.5%	11.0%	12.4%
Median family income	\$33,844	\$49,184	\$50,046



Virtual Internships

- Each group within section is assigned a community nursing role
 - Occupational Health
 - Two industries specified
 - School nurse
 - Elementary (K – 8)
 - Secondary (9 – 12)
 - Health Department nurse
 - Home Health nurse
 - Parish nurse
 - Prison nurse



Students learn by:

- Completing topic research, developing rationale for information inclusion, and consulting with group-mates
- Exploring authoritative sources
- Answering questions posed by faculty and peers during presentations in class
- Comparing their briefs to others
- Feedback from faculty on written briefs



“Newspaper”:

Killardton News and Distraction

More news than you need for this assignment!

- Articles are faculty-written to engage as many nursing roles as possible
- Includes school lunch menus and letters to the editor
- Articles follow up on each other; students encouraged to use cumulatively but not exclusively



“Briefs”

- Prepared by each group each week of project
- Set priorities and nursing interventions for the assigned topic (communicable disease, environmental issues, etc.)
- Student groups decide *which* brief will be used to describe:
 - **A policy related to a community issue that supports nurses or one which would help them address the problem identified**



Topic: Disaster/ Environment

- Critical analysis of environmental characteristics of fictional town
- Examples of newspaper articles:
 - Fear of pollution from poultry processing
 - Risk of flooding
 - Lead poisoning
 - Dangerous intersection
 - Fire in Gym → youth at mall
 - Violence/ muggings
 - “Senior striders” cancelled

Policies related to Environment or Disasters

- Home Health Nurses: Home fire safety
 - Insurance policies should provide 7 days' extra medication on first filling to be placed in emergency evacuation kit
- High School Nurses: Decreased physical activity of students since fire
 - Daily physical education, daily recess, and physical activity opportunities before and after school



Topic: Vulnerable populations

- Critical evaluation of census data and statistics that support identification of other problems/concerns
- Examples from Newspaper articles:
 - Suicide
 - Teen unable to cope with disapproval of judgmental community
 - Prisoner suicide
 - Xenophobic letters to the editor (re: arriving Mexican poultry plant workers)



Policies related to Vulnerable Populations

- Prison Nurses: Elderly & dying inmates
 - Counseling to develop and review advance directives
 - Make Hospice and other compassionate care available while maintaining security
- Occupational Health Nurses (Post Office):
On-the-job stress
 - Offer employees anonymous counseling as part of benefit plan to manage stress, depression, anxiety, etc.



Quantitative analysis of Policy Content

- Students took pre-test and post-test of knowledge, attitudes, and intention to use knowledge or skills
 - “*Community-Oriented Health Care Scale*”
 - Modified for BSN students



“Community-Oriented Health Care Scale” (modified)

- Knowledge items related to policy:
 - The role of government regulation in shaping direction of health care system
 - Who pays for health care
 - Relationship between health insurance and access to health care
 - Interdependence between health and issues of political, economic, and social development



Pretest vs. post-test

- All changes in expected direction (increased knowledge)
- Paired t-tests all significant at $p = 0.000$ (preliminary data, $n = 32$)
- Control group (non-concurrent) data not yet available; will be analyzed to determine if course or teaching methodology made the difference



Feedback

- Faculty:
 - Discussion → references to political aspects of role and intervention design
 - Student work reflected integration of material, including leadership role
 - Time intensive
- Students:
 - Appeared excited and engaged during class
 - Felt challenged
 - Some felt that exercise was “childish”



Questions?

