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A simulation to improve nursing students' understanding of the experience of Middle Eastern Refugees

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Summary Statement

Title

A simulation to improve nursing students' understanding of the experience of Middle Eastern Refugees

Background

Nursing students of Grand Valley State University's (GVSU) Kirkhoff College of Nursing (KCON) are graduating into their professional careers at a time when The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2019) reports a total of 25.9 million refugees world-wide, this is the largest number of total refugees seen in history. Of these, Syrian refugees compose the largest nationality at 6.7 million (UNHCR, 2019). Michigan is reported by the Refugee Processing Center (2019) as the seventh highest resettlement state in 2017 with the highest resettlement of Syrian refugees--294--in the United States. Thus adding a new population of patients for which these future nurses must be responsibly prepared to care for with competence and caring.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2008) cites cultural competence as a curriculum requirement, defined as "the attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for providing quality care to diverse populations" (p. 1). However, western countries' media negatively portrays refugees as a threat to safety, health, and economic prosperity which has led to the dehumanization of this population (Esses & Medianu, 2013). As such, it is relevant that future nurses be exposed to a learning experience which truly portrays the culture of the Middle East and more importantly the unique culture of refugee populations.

Simulation

Summary Statement

A simulation was constructed with the aim of improving nursing students' understanding of the needs of Middle Eastern refugees.

The research questions associated with this simulation were what are student nurses' perceptions on the unique culture of the Middle Eastern refugee population after participating in a simulation of this populations' experiences, and how will these influence the students' interactions with this population in their nursing career?

Approval was granted from the GVSU Internal Review Board (IRB) to conduct the research. Student nurses were recruited through GVSU KCON Student Nursing Association (SNA); the event was one of many optional events which GVSU KCON nursing students could choose from to receive Leadership Initiative Credit (LIC) points. Next a simulation was held on October 22nd where eight students spent 25 minutes experiencing the day in the life of a refugee. The simulation also included a debrief at the end, and the option to participate in a short survey concerning their experience. Answers to the anonymous survey questions were collected, and data was compiled from the open ended questions and likert questions found on the survey.

Methods

The compiled data from the survey open ended questions was analyzed using a four step modified Giorgi method of phenomenological data analysis (DeCastro, 2003) which involves reading the transcripts in their entirety, eliminating extraneous words to reveal the essence of the content, breaking content into meaning units, and transforming the meaning units into situated structure statement (SSS). Finally, general structure statements (GSS) were created from the SSSs to capture the general and essential essence of the experience. Data from the one likert scale question was used to validate the qualitative findings.

Summary Statement

Findings

Analysis of the data revealed 101 meaning units which were then transformed into 13 SSS. Next the 13 SSS's revealed the following general structure statements: one, the simulation was realistic and informative and participants offered constructive feedback, and two, After the simulation, overall, the student nurses had a greater understanding of the refugee experience, the difficult choices and lack of control of refugees face. Overall, students reported a greater awareness of the need to implement culturally competent care, a change in their perspective and increased awareness of the refugee situation.

Implications

The simulation demonstrated it is an appropriate, constructive method of improving nursing student's perspectives of the unique culture of the middle eastern refugee population. Students will be able to utilize their new understanding of the Middle Eastern refugee experience to provide improved culturally competent care in their future practice to a wide variety of patient populations. This experience also helped nursing students become more culturally self aware helping them to be change agents in their future health care organizations. The promising results from this small study point the value of other nursing programs and health care organizations implementing like simulations to foster cultural awareness and competency in their students and employees.

Summary Statement

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