

Value added learning for mental health nursing students

This poster embraces several themes but in particular reflects practical innovations in education and the student experience.

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Abstract

The poster focuses upon an innovative teaching and learning experience utilising experiential learning as popularised by Kolb (Kolb D 1984). It describes a 'Value-Added' project which encouraged mental health nursing students to organise and experience events and then reflect upon their roles and skills in relation to these (Burnard 2002). A humanistic teaching approach gave the students full and equal involvement in the project which embraced the needs of a range of learning styles as defined by Honey and Mumford (1992).

Students were involved in the running of a public mental health awareness and film night and a follow up mental health music night at a major city centre arts venue. They were also encouraged to create links with local schools and organise events such as mental health assemblies and mental health awareness sessions fitting in with the A level psychology syllabus. The students were also encouraged to engage and collaborate with service user groups to prepare and deliver these sessions in partnership. The students were faced with members of the local community many of whom were looking to them to provide general guidance upon mental health wellbeing and discuss personal issues of concern to them.

Mental health promotion is an ever increasing aspect of the work of mental health nurses in modern society and this 'in vivo' learning project supplied an innovative experience for student mental health nurses to be part of a real mental health promotion exercise and draw valuable lessons from it. It enabled the students to think creatively about unorthodox methods of health promotion and the feasibility of staging such an event,

and in particular the targeting of a young audience. It required them to work in a very different professional mode and experience learning in a different mode from more traditional formats. Students were then encouraged to write the experience up and prepare a poster for conference presentation. Such a level of engagement with the subject leads to a deeper level of learning as described by Ramsden (1992).

Other 'value – added' projects currently proposed / under way are the organisation of a schools 'Battle of the Bands' mental health awareness night with local service users, the organising and delivering of a monthly 'Mental health hour' on SIREN fm local radio, a mental health awareness tour of village halls capturing rural communities often overlooked, running mental health awareness events at college/university freshers fayres.

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References:

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