Experiences of pre-registration student nurses during mental health clinical placements which enhance practice learning: An Integrative Review

Partington, J., McKeown, E. And Brook, J. (2021)

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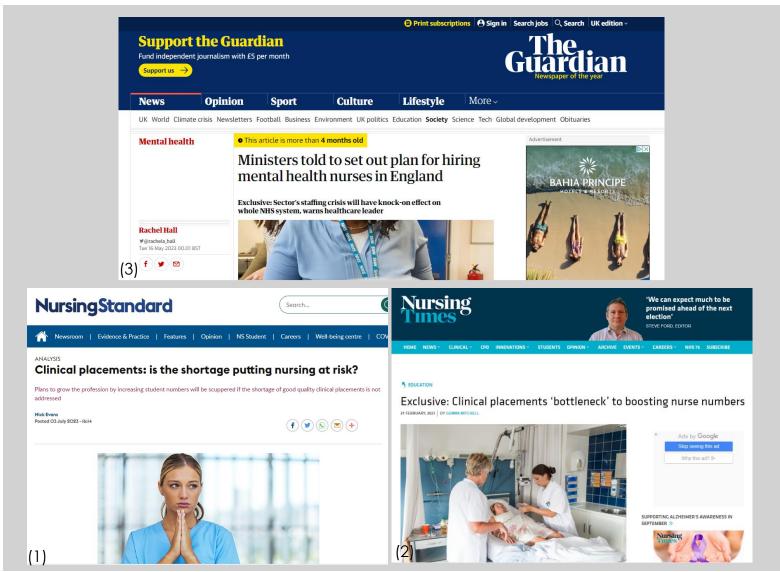Jessica Partington

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Background

- Developing a **sustainable and resilient nursing workforce** has been an international focus following the COVID-19 pandemic

- The pipeline of newly qualified nurses is **restricted by clinical placement opportunities**

- Expansion designs must also embed **best practice** in clinical education to **maintain quality**

- There is a **gap in the literature** related to systematic reviews focused on clinical placements in **mental health nursing contexts**

(3) The Guardian — Mental health: Ministers told to set out plan for hiring mental health nurses in England. Exclusive: Sector's staffing crisis will have knock-on effect on whole NHS system, warns healthcare leader. Rachel Hall @rachela_hall Tue 16 May 2023 00.01 BST

(1) Nursing Standard — ANALYSIS: Clinical placements: is the shortage putting nursing at risk? Plans to grow the profession by increasing student numbers will be scuppered if the shortage of good quality clinical placements is not addressed. Nick Evans Posted 03 July 2023 - 16:14

(2) Nursing Times — EDUCATION: Exclusive: Clinical placements 'bottleneck' to boosting nurse numbers. 21 FEBRUARY, 2023 BY GEMMA MITCHELL

The Integrative Review

Aims and Objectives

- **Further understanding** about experiences that enhance student nurses' learning in mental health contexts

- **Answer the question:** what are the factors that facilitate learning in mental health nursing student clinical placements?

- **Inform** clinical placement design

- **Influence** clinical placement expansion

- **Develop recommendations** for future research

Methods

- An **integrative mixed-methods approach** and **qualitative constant comparative grounded theory synthesis** were chosen.

- Eligible studies **did not include academic experiences**

- Sample included studies from **2009 onwards**

- Search included **MEDLINE Complete**, **CINAHL**, and **APA PsycINFO** concurrently through EBSCOhost

- Included studies were assessed for bias and certainty

Results

- **579 studies** were identified, of which **10 met the eligibility criteria.**

- **7 qualitative**, **2 quantitative**, **1 mixed-methods** articles

- Studies used **focus groups**, **reflective accounts**, and **confidence tools** to capture data

- **International representation** across Australia (n = 4), Canada (n = 2), United States (n = 1), Ireland (n = 1), Scotland (n = 1) and England (n = 1)

Findings

The findings from the synthesised studies were four overarching emergent themes:

Immersion in the nursing role

Lack of focused tasks left students questioning the role of a mental health nurse

'Buddying' with clinicians provided a greater insight into what the role entailed

Simulation prior to placements supported students to identify positive nursing behaviours

Relationships that empower autonomous learning

Peers and **multidisciplinary team members** are essential learning relationships – both ad-hoc and via structured models (e.g. C-PAL)

Students reported positive experiences of **greater involvement** which afforded increased confidence and preparedness for practice

Autonomy could be **daunting for inexperienced students**

Opportunity for defined and subtle skill development

The **C-PAL (Coaching and Peer Assisted Learning) supervision model** supported students to independently identify learning opportunities

Community and **non-traditional placements** supported students to recognise the importance of more subtle skills, such as communication and therapeutic relationships

Student experiences of people with mental health needs

Caring for patients as people rather than focusing on primary diagnosis led to transformative experiences

Conclusion

- Mental health placements have **unique differences** to other clinical settings

- This review offers new knowledge about the **importance of subtle skills development** within clinical placements

- The person-centred nature of mental health nursing results in the **need for greater emphasis on subtle skills**, such as active listening and awareness of nonverbal cues.

- Some nursing programmes do not adequately focus on this, and **skill development remains concentrated on defined tasks**.

Recommendations

- Further research on:
  o **Subtle skill development**;
  o **Defining the role** of mental health nurses; and
  o The **socialisation process** of students into the mental health nurse professional identity

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21st Feb 2024

(1)