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A Community Engaged Learning Pedagogical Approach to Population Health and Primary Prevention

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With the shift in healthcare to primary care, health promotion and population health, it is important for nursing students to engage in a variety of learning venues. The need for collaborative practices in the community is an ever increasing necessity. Community Engagement is a signature experience for the students at The College of New Jersey. This opportunity allows students to apply their additional knowledge and enhanced skills to address a community need, as well as develop their own civic skills and clinical skills through an experiential learning opportunity. Projects are guided by the learning objectives of the course as well as the needs of the community. Students in their sophomore year spend 25 hours participating in community engagement in a variety of setting building on their core content in nursing health assessment, nutrition and lifespan classes. This type of community based learning allows the students to care for populations in the community setting that they would typically see in the outpatient settings with chronic conditions, develop patient communication skills with various age groups, practice health promotion and disease prevention and increase their awareness for the relevant health issues of rural and underserved communities.

Students projects varied, some students chose to organize a healthy walking club and/or a gym buddy for students with differing abilities on the college campus. Another group was engaged in the local public school system where childhood obesity and Type II diabetes is prevalent, in a program known as SNACK (Smart Nutrition and Collaboration for Kids). The students participated in recess get up and move activities twice a week. Students also went to TASK (the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen) where they served meals, taught health lessons, performed screenings, and assisted in teaching various topics to students who were earning their GED. Undergraduates provided breastfeeding and parenting classes to teen mothers at Project Teach, a comprehensive educational program which provides pregnant and parenting adolescents with the skills needed to create a positive life for themselves and their children. Finally the students participated with Dawn of Hope Project whose program is designed to provide practical instruction to girls in critical areas such as character development, building self-esteem, embracing their identity, life skills, health and wellness. The students provided educational information sessions on various topics related to health and wellness as well as self-esteem.

Students as well as faculty benefit from this type of educational/clinical setting. Students acquire the ability to apply what they have learned in “the real world”, improved social responsibility and citizenship skills, connections with professionals and community members allow for learning and career opportunities and improve assessment and clinical skills. Faculty benefit from new opportunities for research and publication via new relationships between faculty and community partners and it allows networking opportunities with engaged faculty in other disciplines or institutions as well as other healthcare professionals.

Title:

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Keywords:

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References:

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Abstract Summary:

With the shift in healthcare to health promotion and population health it is important for nursing students to engage in a variety of learning venues. The need for collaborative practices in the community is an increasing necessity. Community Engagement is a signature experience for the students of the nursing program.

Content Outline:

With the shift in healthcare to primary care, health promotion and population health, it is important for nursing students to engage in a variety of learning venues. The need for collaborative practices in the community is an ever increasing necessity. Community Engagement is a signature experience for the students at The College of New Jersey. Through various community partnerships students are able to participate in health education, health screenings, health promotion activities such as flu clinics and immunization clinics. This opportunity allows students to apply their additional knowledge and enhanced skills to address a community need, as well as develop their own civic skills and clinical skills through an experiential learning opportunity. Projects are guided by the learning objectives of the nursing course as well as the needs of the community.

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