

Scholarly Reflection on Nursing Practice: Undergraduate Student Discoveries from Four Case Studies

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Abstract

Nursing, like other professional disciplines, draws from multiple sources of knowledge to inform its practice. Over the years, various models of practice have been used to formalize nursing's approach to knowledge-based practice, including research-based, theory-guided, and evidence-based models. The intent of this ensemble of student articles is to demonstrate students' application of a framework of scholarly reflection to gain new insights from their nursing practice experiences. These articles are based upon Honors assignments completed by 11 undergraduate first and second semester nursing students who were enrolled simultaneously in a course on scientific inquiry and a clinical course. The students completed the assignment by working in their clinical groups (for a total of four groups), applying what they were learning theoretically and clinically to generate new ideas about facilitating their patient's well-being.

Introduction

Scholarship in nursing practice requires a diversity of knowledge sources in addition to the empirical pattern dominant in research studies. In particular, scholarship that occurs in the context of nursing practice provides the opportunity for a richer and more immediate understanding of patients than might be realized when knowledge *application* is separated from knowledge *production* (Reed, 2006a). This ensemble of articles demonstrates knowledge discoveries of first and second semester undergraduate Honors students during their simultaneous enrollment in a clinically-based course and a course focused on the process of scientific inquiry (Reed, 2006b). Students worked in one of four clinical groups, applying the professor's *Framework of Scholarly Reflection* to analyze a current patient care situation.

Framework of Scholarly Reflection

The idea for the Framework of Scholarly Reflection was based upon a philosophy of reflective practice, initiated by Schön (1983) and now widely subscribed to enhance student learning and theory development for practice (James & Clark, 1994; Peden-McAlpine, Tomlinson, Forneris, Genck, & Meiers, 2005). Reflective practice “challenges the exclusivity of the traditional methodologies used to discover knowledge” and privileges the context of practice in integrating various sources of knowledge to make new discoveries and develop theory (Durgahee, 1997).

The framework incorporates two dimensions: Nursing patterns of knowing and nursing theories. Students used the classic nursing models of Orem, Johnson, and Roy (although any theoretical systems could be used) to help frame understanding of their nursing role and patients' health

experiences. Patterns of knowing were drawn from Carper's (1978) seminal work on fundamental patterns of knowing – empirical, esthetic, ethical, and personal – along with White's (1995) sociopolitical pattern of knowing. The patterns of knowing are briefly defined as follows: Empirical – traditional scientific approaches to theory development and research; Esthetic – discovery of new ideas from empathy with patients and direct experiences in practice; Ethical -- focused on moral issues and judgments; Personal – involves an authentic self in interpersonal encounters with others (Carper, 1978); Sociopolitical – the contexts wherein nursing care and the nursing profession are enacted (White, 1995).

Highlights of the results of the students' inquiry are presented in each student group article below, along with excerpts of the four actual patient situations (with identifying details removed). The four articles demonstrate the variety of clinical insights that can emerge from integrating a diversity of knowledge sources and patterns of knowing available to first and second semester nursing students. The goal was to discover something new, beyond the existing evidence found in the literature, about how they could make a positive difference in their patient's well-being.

This ensemble of student articles demonstrates how use of diverse dimensions of nursing knowledge can extend evidence-based practice. Reflective inquiry can enrich predetermined foundations of practice found in students' technical applications of psychomotor skills and research findings. The students' applications of a Framework of nursing theories and patterns of knowing in reflecting on their clinical practice helped provide them with new insights and innovations for practice.

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