

Suzanne Gillson, MSN, RN and Nisha Cherian, MSN, RN

Abstract: Cultural diversity is often a subject that is incorporated into nursing education as a single objective to be addressed. In reality, the ability to connect to people of differing cultures is a concept that provides the basis of patient-centered care and should be emphasized throughout baccalaureate nursing education. Culture is the unseen entity that explains why a person acts and reacts to the world around them. It is not an ethnic separation of people, but rather any shared traits or characteristics that define a group of people. Culture can be measured through personal, professional, social, and economic boundaries. The willingness to cross over cultural boundaries and see the world through another view point is the beginning of obtaining cultural competence.

Key Words: Culture, Cultural Diversity, Baccalaureate, Nursing Education.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN BACCALAUREATE NURSING EDUCATION

Nurse educators are ideally positioned to assist students in developing cultural competence through a variety of teaching methods. Campinha-Bacote's (2002) model of cultural competence is a practical method of helping both nurse educators and students reflect on and incorporate the skills needed to achieve cultural competency. A review of the literature reveals interventions that can be used to increase cultural awareness and develop cultural skills. To begin this process, nurse educators must value cultural diversity in order to model cultural competency for students. Increasingly diverse patient populations mandate the need for nursing education to prepare culturally competent nurses.

Background

Awareness of culture in nursing care dates back to the early 20th century as pioneers of the profession realized the impact of a patient's social background. Interest in culture within nursing education was formalized in the years following World War II with the impact of military nurses and their experiences traveling

abroad (DeSantis & Lipson, 2007). Today, accrediting bodies like the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2018) offer resources to help educators incorporate the concept of cultural competency in nursing curriculum (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2018).

Nursing education is one of the major initial steps in providing education about cultural competence to baccalaureate nursing students. The Institute of Medicine has provided sufficient evidence of health disparities in the United States and recommends that one way to address this problem is incorporation of cross-cultural education and culturally competent practice into nursing education (Smedley, Stith, & Nelson, 2003). Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989) defined diversity as an "awareness and acceptance of differences in communication, life view, and definitions of health and family" (p. 19). Cultural diversity is a significant issue to address in nursing curriculum due to the United States' rapidly increasing diverse population (Ah, & Cassara, 2013).

Findings of Cultural Diversity in Baccalaureate Nursing Education: An Overview

Teaching and learning about culturally competent practice in pre-licensure nursing programs is needed to ensure a culturally competent health care workforce (Smedley, Butler, & Bristow, 2004). As per the National League for Nursing report, "At the institutional level, invisibility is often evidenced through failures to address issues of diversity and engage in honest, thoughtful reflection or analysis" (Hinds, 2008, p. 185). According to

Suzanne Gillson, MSN, RN, corresponding author, is Assistant Professor of Nursing, Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Department, Freed-Hardeman University, Henderson, Tennessee. Nisha Cherian, MSN, RN, Professor, Associate Degree Nursing Department, San Jacinto Community College Central, Pasadena, Texas.

Stake (2008), "The utility of case research to practitioners and policy makers is in its extension of experience" (p. 142).

Coffman and colleagues (2004) noted that exposure to ethnically diverse populations was associated with increased cultural self-efficacy. Larsen and Rief (2011) noted that nursing students who participated in a two to three weeks immersion program rated their transcultural self-efficacy significantly greater than those students who were in the control group.

Kuehn et al., (2011) conducted a study with undergraduate nursing students from the United States, Mexico, and Canada who were provided with intercultural experiences online which included discussions regarding nursing care and health care norms and issues in different countries. This participation enabled them to discuss and learn about issues that had never been brought to their attention. The development of the concept of cultural competence in nursing may be linked to the emergence of several broader trends, including the embracing of multicultural education, educational reform emphasizing critical thinking skills, and trends toward experimental, practical, and applied

ness, knowledge, skill, and encounters. When put together in a synergistic fashion, these constructs form the basis of cultural competency (Campinha-Bacote, 2002).

The following is a scenario the author employed to teach cultural competency and congruency in a baccalaureate level nursing program within a small, private, university that contained a very diverse student population with 69% of students being from a racial or ethnic minority group (Houston Baptist University, 2018). With such a high level of diversity among the student body, the author felt that the best resource in helping students to understand culture is the students themselves. The primary teaching method employed in striving to engage students in the topic of culture was called going "low-tech". Students were asked to put away all technology devices and gather in a circle or group seating where each student would be in a position that allowed for an open exchange of information. This provided an environment that encouraged communication among students. The author began the conversation with open ended questions asking what culture meant to the students. By establishing the definition of culture, stu-