



Reflective Journaling on Weight Bias by Nursing Students

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Introduction

- Healthcare providers may hold biased perceptions about a patient based on weight, resulting in weight-based discrimination (Budd et al, 2011)
- Weight-based discrimination in health care may negatively impact quality of care.
- Strategies to reduce weight bias are typically action-oriented and knowledge-based but lack introspective evaluation component. Self-reflection is the process of introspection, combined with willingness to learn about oneself to achieve self-awareness (Fyers and Greenwood, 2016)
- Providing opportunities for self-reflection on weight bias in nursing curriculum may lead to reducing or eradicating existing biases (Schultz & Baker, 2017)

Purpose

To report on qualitative data from students’ reflective journals collected as part of a weight sensitivity training program.

Methods: Design & Procedure

- This study was part of a parent study testing curriculum-embedded weight sensitivity training program for third year nursing students.
- Students completed 5 journal assignments during the semester focusing on care of individuals with obesity by responding to prompts provided (Table 1)
- Students received feedback from research team and encouraged to implement feedback in clinical experience.

Table 1: Sample Reflective Journal Prompts

- What stereotypes do I have about persons with obesity?
- Do I make assumptions about a person’s character, intelligence, abilities, health status or behaviors based only on their weight?
- How do I feel when I work with persons of different body sizes?

Analysis

- Qualitative thematic analysis conducted (Nowell et al, 2017; Vaismoradi, 2013)
- Two authors read and reread journals to obtain broad perspective of journal entries
- Independent data summary to determine key concepts, categories and themes.
- Final themes identified through review and consensus

Results

Table 2: Themes and Sample Journal Entries

Theme	Student Journal Response
Increased self-awareness of personal weight bias	<p>“I am ashamed to say that I hold a bias and that I tend to stereotype those that are obese.”</p> <p>“When I reflect upon how I felt while caring for a bariatric patient, I realize that my own thoughts are less than favorable.”</p>
Acknowledgment of obesity as a chronic disease, not a choice	<p>“Before viewing the sensitivity training presentation and video, I viewed obesity as a conscious choice that a person makes rather than a disease that plagues them”</p> <p>“Obesity is not a result of poor intelligence, or character. Obesity is a disease. Patients with cancer, influenza, or asthma are not discriminated for their diagnosis, why must patients with obesity be subject to such treatment?”</p>

Results Cont.

Table 2 cont: Themes and Sample Journal Entries

Theme	Student Journal Response
Insufficient resources or training my perpetuate weight bias	<p>“I immediately felt nervous for the potential challenges that having a larger patient would bring.”</p> <p>“I am sometimes frustrated when working with persons with obesity in the clinical setting if I am having trouble transferring them and worry if hearing their lung or heart sounds is harder.”</p>
Opportunity for weight sensitivity training to improve patient care	<p>“I have had the opportunity to identify ways my practice has changed since participating in the sensitivity training and have been better able to evaluate and intervene in certain situations involving patients who are obese to improve the care of my patients.”</p>

- Using reflective journaling as teaching tool enabled students to better understand their conscious or unconscious biases.
- Reflective journaling with feedback allowed students to identify areas of improvement in clinical practice and ethical competence.
- Self-reflection allowed students to develop therapeutic and effective communication skills with patients of all sizes.

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