

# Preliminary Investigation to Improve Nursing Students Ability to Provide Holistic Care

Dale Hilty, PhD ~ Erin Dougherty, MSN, RN ~  
Kerry Fankhauser, MS, RN ~ Scott Dolan, PhD, RN



## Background

### Holism

According to Geertje Boschma (1994, pp. 324, 326, 328), holistic nursing can be defined as

... the integration, harmony, and balance of body, mind, and spirit; a focus on wholeness of the individual with emphasis on the process of self-healing rather than on disease; illness as an opportunity for growth and increased self-awareness; and the reciprocal relationship between nurse and patient with emphasis on self-responsibility, health promotion, and lifestyle ... Nursing was conceptualized as holistic, comprehensive care, including physical, social and mental health aspects as well as teaching healthy living by going into the neighborhoods, homes and schools. Insights from the mental hygiene movement were integrated in nursing's public health perspective (Taylor, 1934, 1935) ... The new holistic medical model underscores the uniqueness and unity of the individual and emphasizes the potential for self actualization. It has a major emphasis on self-help and self-awareness; the person has responsibility for his or her own health and well-being. Promotion of healthier habits in the areas of nutrition, exercise, stress reduction, lifestyle patterns and belief systems attempts to increase wellness. Illness is considered a potential for growth; an equal, participatory relationship between patient and practitioner is seen as contributing to the healing process.

According to Dahshan & Diab (2015, p. 70), holistic nursing ...

Holistic nursing focuses on promoting health and wellness, assisting healing and preventing or alleviating suffering. Holistic care in today's nursing helps to enhance the total well-being of the patient. Every individual is unique and should be cared for as an entity comprising of body, soul and spirit (Bamfo and Hagin, 2011, O'Brien, 2011 and Odbehr et al. 2014) ... The American Nurses Association (ANA) officially recognized holistic nursing as a specialty area of nursing practice in 2006. Specialty status provides holistic nurses with a foundation for practice. It provides a clear depiction of who we are to the rest of the world of nursing, other healthcare professionals, and the public. The American Holistic Nurses Association defined holistic nursing as "all nursing practice that has healing the whole person as its goal (Hess, 2011). A holistic nurse is a licensed nurse who takes a "mind-body-spirit-emotion-environment" approach to the practice of traditional nursing (Thornton, 2012, Dossey et al. 2013 and Klebanoff and Hess, 2014).

### Compassion & Care

Geraghty, Oliver, & Lauva (2016, p. 836) differentiate compassion and caring.

Compassion and caring are two generic terms that are separate ... Compassion has been defined as comprising attentiveness, presence and saliency, in order to anticipate the needs of patients or clients ... If care is considered an act, part of routine tasks conducted by nurses and midwives to fulfill the needs of patients, then caring can be considered a product ...

## Background (Cont'd)

Bramley & Matiti (2014, pp. 2791-2792, 2797) provide insight into the expectation that Registered Nurses are compassionate and caring, patient perceptions of compassion in the healthcare settings, and whether compassion can be taught to healthcare professionals.

Compassion unites people in difficult times and is a foundation to building human relationships which can promote both physical and mental health (Gilbert 2010). In the United Kingdom (UK), the importance of compassion in care is highlighted in a number of recent healthcare documents arguing that nurses should provide compassionate care to patients (Health Service Ombudsman 2011, Department of Health 2012, Francis 2013). However, there is increasing concern worldwide that despite the growing capabilities and sophistication of healthcare systems, there is a failure at a fundamental level with care and compassion (Youngson 2008) ... Designing and implementing education strategies to meet the challenge of ensuring that nursing care is delivered with compassion is a priority ... In direct contrast, however, the Patients Association (2009, 2011, 2012) reported patient experiences deficient in basic nursing care, and the 'Care and Compassion Report' from the Health Service Ombudsman presented the reality of lack of compassion within health care (Health Service Ombudsman 2011).

### Undergraduate Education, Care, & Compassion

In Waterman's (2007) dissertation, nursing students emphasized Watson's Holistic Carative exemplars of respect, knowledge, being responsible, considering outcomes of caring, competence, effective communication skills (active listening, openness), developing a trusting relationship, advocating, flexibility, and assisting the patient to reach their highest level of wellness (meeting the patient's needs, implementing health teaching).

Two major areas of focus illustrated students not incorporating the exemplars in their clinical practice. First, the degree students demonstrate the carative exemplars can be observed during a senior precepted clinical rotation where faculty receives student handoff a report about their patients. For example, students often repeat the unprofessional language (e.g., "frequent flyer", diagnostic labels, "drug seeker") used by some staff nurses. This type of prejudicial language can result in objectification, which appears to influence nursing students' indifference as opposed to kindness, separation vs. being present, and disengagement vs. engagement in care-giving. Second, students frequently focus on skills and task performance, and are inattentive to the holistic care of the patient. This lack of patient-centered focus can adversely impact the patient, leading to ineffective and worsening healthcare outcomes.

## Aim & Methods

Our primary purpose was to explore the degree of compassion towards patients by junior and senior level nursing students. In our research investigation, we selected six scales: kindness, indifference, common humanity, separation, mindfulness, and disengagement (Pommier, 2011). Forty-one BSN nursing students answered Likert-type questions (i.e., self-efficacy, Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) and compassion scale toward others, Pommier, 2011). The self-efficacy scale was used to create two groups (e.g., high self-efficacy scores, moderate-low self-efficacy scores). Hypothesis: Kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness subscales from Pommier's *compassion towards others* instrument would have different mean scores for the two self-efficacy groups.

## Findings

Independent *t*-test analyses (SPSS #25) were significant for Pommier subscales (kindness, *p*=.021; common humanity, *p*=.001; mindfulness, *p*=.001). BSN students with high scores on self-efficacy had high mean scores on these three scales.

## Discussion

A self-efficacy intervention may increase BSN students holistic, compassion, and caring professional behaviors in clinical settings.

## References

- Bamfo, E. A. and Hagin, J. E. (2011). Choosing A Holistic Care Approach for The Elderly. Bachelor Thesis, Yrkeshogskolan, Novia, University of Applied Sciences.
- Boschma, G. (1994). The meaning of holism in nursing: Historical shifts in holistic nursing ideas. *Public Health Nursing*, 11(5), 324-330. <dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1525-1446.1994.tb00194.x>
- Dahshan, M. & Diab, G. (2015). Holistic Nursing Care As Perceived By Nurses Working In Wards and Critical Care Units at Menoufiya University Hospital. *Journal of Nursing and Health Science*, 4, 2, 70-78.
- Dossey, B.M., Luck, S. and Schaub, B.G. ( 2013). Nurse Coaching. In: Dossey B. M., Keegan L., eds. Holistic Nursing: A Handbook for Practice. (6thed.). Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett; 189-204.
- Francis, R. (2013). Report of the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry. The Stationery Office, London.
- Geraghty, S., Oliver, K., & Lauva, M. (2016). Reconstructing compassion: Should it be taught as part of the curriculum? *British Journal of Nursing*, 25, 15, 836-839.
- Gilbert, P. (2010). The Compassionate Mind: A New Approach to Life's Challenges. Constable, London.
- Health Service Ombudsman. (2011). Care and Compassion. The Stationery Office, London.
- Hess, D. ( 2011). Defining Holistic Nurse Coaching. AHNA Beginnings, 31(1):16-9.
- Klebanoff, N.A. and Hess, D. (2014). Holistic Nursing: Focusing on the Whole Person. *American Nurse Today*, 9 (10).
- O'Brien, M. E. (2011). Spirituality in Nursing: Standing on Holy Ground. Sudbury, Mass, Jones & Bartlett Learning.
- Odbehr, L., Kvigne, K., Hauge, S. and Danbolt, L.J. (2014). Nurses' and Care Workers' Experiences of Spiritual Needs in Residents with Dementia in Nursing Homes: A Qualitative Study. *BMC Nursing* 13(12): 1-9.
- Pommier, E. A. (2011). The compassion scale. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences*, 72, 1174.
- Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). Generalized self-efficacy scale. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston, *Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio*. Causal and control beliefs (pp. 35-37). Windsor, UK: NFER-NELSON.
- The Patients Association. (2012). Stories from Present, Lessons for the Future. The Patients Association, London.
- Thornton, L. (2012). What is Holistic Nursing? Retrieved from <http://www.ahna.org/AboutUs/WhatIsHolisticNursing/tabid/1165/Default.aspx>.
- Waterman, A. (2007). A case study of caring in nurse education (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from [etd.ohiolink.edu/rws\\_etd/document/get/osu1178994034/inline](etd.ohiolink.edu/rws_etd/document/get/osu1178994034/inline)
- Youngson, R. (2008). Future Debates: Compassion in Healthcare: The Missing Dimension of Healthcare Reform? The NHS Confederation, London.