

SESSION 14

(Platform Presentations)

Bringing the evidence into practice:

Linking science and practice in education 3

Thursday, November 8, 2012

ROOM C.E.20

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14.002

A qualitative study of physiotherapy final year undergraduate students' perceptions of a narrative reasoning course

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Purpose: The purpose of this study was to explore the final year physiotherapy students' perspective about the contribution of a course in narrative reasoning as a means to promote patient-centred care.

Relevance: Narrative reasoning has been presented as a core component of the health professionals' competences that should be promoted in the undergraduate curricula. It has been introduced in curricula across the western world, particularly in medicine courses, and is now considered as a useful resource for understanding the individual as well as for facilitating the adoption of patient-centred care. Despite the recognition of the relevance of narrative reasoning in the education of health professionals, research examining the contribution of narrative competence as a means of promoting patient-centred care in physiotherapy is limited, particularly from the student perspective.

Participants: Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the host Polytechnic. After receiving a detailed information sheet and signing voluntarily the informed consent, eighteen final year physiotherapy students, who had successfully completed the course in narrative reasoning, were randomly assigned to one of three focus groups.

Methods: Focus group were used as method of data collection. Three focus group meetings were carried out at the school location in a quiet, private room, using a semi-structured interview schedule.

Analysis: The sessions were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. The focus group transcripts were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Results: Three superordinate themes emerged from data **Analysis:** »developing distinctive competences«, »shifting students' focus« and »dealing with contextual challenges«. In the first superordinate theme students distinguished their capability to better understand patients' experiences and needs and to be aware of the importance of the therapeutic relationship. Furthermore they highlighted their capability to reflect about patients and about themselves after the course. These competences were perceived as distinctive of the students who enrolled in this course. In the second theme a shift from clinician-centred care to patient-centred care was emphasised. According to students, patient management became much more than »just applying techniques«. They were more conscious of the patients' individuality, which facilitated the inclusion of patients' needs and expectations in the decision-making process. The third theme focused on the contextual challenges students found in clinical practice. At clinical placements students found resistance in changing from the traditional model of practice towards patient-centred care. Despite that resistance, students were committed to patient-centred care, with some of them emphasising their role as agents of change and other showing resignation to these contextual barriers.

Conclusions: Final year physiotherapy students support the inclusion of this module within the physiotherapy undergraduate curricula, recognizing its contribution in developing competences to facilitate patient-centred care.

Implications: This study's findings provide the first insight into the inclusion of a module in narrative reasoning within the physiotherapy undergraduate curriculum in Portugal. Future research is needed to inform curriculum developers on how best to integrate narrative reasoning within the physiotherapy undergraduate curricula.