

COMMUNITY NURSING PRACTICE IN A FACULTY OF NURSING HEALTH PROMOTION PROJECT

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Over the past three years the Faculty of Nursing of the University of Toronto has developed a health promotion project to provide unique community practice for nursing students and to offer health promotion services to the Faculty of Nursing and to the broader university community. This project was also intended to demonstrate the role of nursing in health promotion by putting into practice within the university community some of the Faculty of Nursing's beliefs about health. A review of the literature suggested that faculties of nursing have rarely taken advantage of the health promotion opportunities on their own campuses to provide community nursing practice for their students. This article will describe the project's aims, objectives, implementation, and evaluation.

Principal Objectives of the Project

To provide community nursing practice

Students in the project are in their final year of a four year baccalaureate program. All senior students practise in the community three days a week for a 12-week term. During this practice students work with individuals, families and, where possible, with groups and aggregates. Some students, however, have limited experience with groups and many do not practise in agencies where the needs of aggregates are addressed. Students rarely become involved in the planning, implementing and evaluating of community health programs. They are not often directly exposed to the social, political and environmental factors influencing the development of such programs. These are serious omissions in the preparation of nurses to be active participants in a health care system in which there is a growing focus on health promotion through community programs that are directed at population groups (DeBella, Martin & Siddall, 1986). Although some writers suggest that the

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nursing of population groups and aggregates is the domain of the Master's prepared community nurse (Anderson & Meyer, 1985), in reality, few community nurses currently have graduate preparation. It seems clear, therefore, that baccalaureate graduates should be prepared to function in an expanding community health nurse role. (Blank & McElmurry, 1986; Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, 1985).

Recognition of these gaps in the preparation of our students was an important reason for seeking supplemental community nursing experiences outside the usual settings. A survey of the campus indicated that health and counselling services were already available to all students in the university, but resources for health promotion were limited. Here, then, was a defined, accessible community that had inadequate health promotion. This setting appeared to offer opportunities for considerable creativity and independence in carrying out the nursing process at the community level. The presence on campus of student services and other health science faculties also suggested a potential for interdisciplinary collaboration. Such collaboration, especially among health science students, is not easy to arrange. It is, notwithstanding, valuable preparation for the cooperative planning necessary in present day community health services. (Ministry of Health of Ontario, 1983; Mustard, 1982).

To offer health promotion services in the faculty of nursing and to the broader university community

The literature notes several potential benefits that could result from the provision of health promotion services in universities. Life-style patterns confirmed or developed during young adulthood may have a significant impact on health status in later years. The young people in our universities will be among the future parents and health professionals who will influence the health habits of this and other generations. Furthermore, as educational institutions, universities should be concerned with promoting the health of their members (Minister of National Health and Welfare, 1987). Health educators are also aware of the need to take advantage of the teachable moment. Lawrence Green (1984) suggests that such moments are found in the transition period between adolescence and adulthood when young people are developing autonomy in all areas, including increased responsibility for their own health behaviours.

To demonstrate nursing's role in health promotion

Another consideration that prompted the development of this project was concern about the Faculty of Nursing's lack of visibility on the University of Toronto campus in the area of health promotion. This situation on the campus reflected a similar one in the community where the image of nursing

in health promotion is ill-defined. A project designed to demonstrate Nursing's role in health promotion on the campus would help to strengthen Nursing's image in this regard.

Conceptual Framework

In the first year of the project, assumptions and beliefs upon which to base an educational experience in health promotion were identified by the participating students and the faculty coordinator (University of Toronto Faculty of Nursing, 1986). These were reviewed and revised yearly. This framework was organized around the two main goals of the project: health promotion programming as a learning experience for students and the development of programs to promote health on the campus. Some of the beliefs and assumptions were adopted from the faculty's conceptual framework. They included, for example, the statement that, "In nursing, professional caring is expressed in the aims of promoting optimal health and wellness and in activities which facilitate the development of persons as their own most valuable resource for achieving the well-being that is possible," (University of Toronto Faculty of Nursing, 1981, p.1) and the assumption about health that, "Biological, cognitive and environmental factors interact to influence health at any given time" (University of Toronto Faculty of Nursing, 1981, p.3). The framework includes assumptions that reflect current thinking about health promotion, such as the following: changes in health behaviour may be easier to make during periods of transition in our lives (Green, 1984); and growth and change are often facilitated by social support (World Health Organization, 1984). The Faculty of Nursing philosophy of education is evident in the belief that students need opportunities, like those provided in the project, to participate in the development of their own learning experiences. Concepts such as self-responsibility, peer support and the importance of a healthy environment, which were derived from these assumptions and beliefs, became intrinsic to project activities. These assumptions, beliefs and concepts are reflected in the following specific objectives, which were formulated, and revised each year as a basis for program development.

Specific Objectives of the Project

1. To make the project known in the Faculty and to establish its credibility as a health promotion resource.
2. To encourage students to participate in the project as providers and consumers of health promotion services.
3. To associate the project closely with the curriculum.
4. To expand the project to serve other members of the University community.
5. To identify the health interests, risks and problems of the Faculty population.

6. To develop health promotion programs based on this assessment.
7. To collaborate with other health promotion services, health professionals and health science students in developing programs.
8. To increase awareness of the environmental, social and political factors affecting health and health promotion programming.
9. To explore health promotion strategies to increase awareness, provide information and support change at the individual, group and aggregate levels.
10. To examine the theory and research base for health promotion.
11. To provide experiential learning for the project participants in improving their own health practices.
12. To continue to develop a conceptual framework for the project.
13. To develop a proposal for external funding for a study derived from the project.

Development of Programs

After the first year, about 20% of the class were involved in the project, devoting to it from one half to two out of the three days per week allotted to community clinical practice. Initially, students developed programs that addressed the health interests identified in a faculty-wide survey of students, staff and faculty. These were stress, fitness, nutrition and sexuality. Programs were directed primarily at the student body. Students were encouraged to establish objectives consistent with those of the project for each of the programs they developed. Strategies were designed to increase health awareness, provide information and promote change in health behaviours in these areas. The two most fully developed programs, stress management and sexuality, will be described.

Stress management program

In the survey of the Faculty of Nursing population, stress was identified as the main health concern by students in all four undergraduate years. This is not surprising in view of the results of studies of stress experienced by university students (Gupta, McMahon & Sandhu, 1985) and the increasing suicide rates for young adults (Tousignant, 1985). Stressful situations are also frequently encountered by health professionals in their practice. Therefore, students should learn the skills that will eventually help them, their colleagues, and their clients to cope with these situations by using healthy behaviours.

Efforts were made to identify the specific stressors experienced by undergraduate nursing students in different years of the program and to help them to cope with these concerns regarding academic demands and clinical practice. Discussion sessions were organized for first year students to help

them develop strategies to facilitate their transition to life in a professional faculty. Regular meetings were arranged for groups of second year students to encourage them to use peer support in coping with their first concurrent clinical experience. The project students who developed this latter program were the most successful in incorporating the evaluation phase of health promotion programming. They adapted a stress assessment questionnaire and administered it to the experimental groups before and after the series of meetings and to control groups at the same times. For both of these stress programs University Counselling and Learning Skills Service staff members acted as consultants to the project students, meeting with them at the beginning and end of the term to help them plan and assess their programs.

Sexuality program

Birth control education was one of the health promotion programs already being offered by the University Health Service. On several occasions project students collaborated with a nurse from the Health Service in setting up birth control displays and information centres on campus. The students, however, went on to develop a sexuality program with broader goals, such as clarifying sexual values and examining the preparation of nursing students in the area of sexuality. Activities included setting up question-and-answer boards on campus, responding to invitations to speak to groups of students outside the faculty, arranging for speakers and films for nursing students and writing articles for campus newspapers. Project students also reviewed the nursing courses in the undergraduate program, made recommendations regarding the teaching of sexuality and set up a resource file for students and faculty. This program has been the most successful in achieving continuity in program development and the project objective of collaboration with university student services in promoting health on the campus.

The Festival of Health

To further its goals of offering health promotion services to the broader university community and demonstrating nursing's role in health promotion, the project has sponsored a Festival of Health in each of the past two years. Project students were able to achieve the objective of collaborating with students from other health science faculties, as well as with university student services, and selected community agencies in staging the fairs. Displays and activities were geared to increasing the health awareness of the university population and acquainting them with available health promotion services.

Of the 450 visitors to the second fair, 60 completed evaluation questionnaires, and 75% of these reported that the fair had made them more aware of their own health status and of the health services available. The Festival of Health, however, was a relatively expensive program and time-consuming to

organize; it may be that a less ambitious undertaking, geared to population subgroups such as a women's health fair, would meet the project's educational and service goals equally well.

Expansion of Programs

From its inception the project defined health promotion in terms of political, social and environmental, as well as life-style changes. But initially, activities tended to focus on helping individuals to change their health behaviours. Soon students became familiar with such current thinking as that found in Canadian and international statements on health promotion (Canadian Public Health Association, 1986; Epp, 1986; Kickbusch, 1986). Eventually the theme, "Promote health through healthy life-style, healthy environment and healthy public policy", was adopted by the project. The implementation of this broad theme in practice is illustrated in the anti-smoking and alcohol use programs.

Anti-smoking program

The project was approached by students who requested help in changing smoking practices in the Faculty of Nursing. The project participants assumed an advocacy role and worked with the Student Council to conduct a referendum regarding smoking practices. This referendum resulted in community action to establish some restrictions on smoking in the student lounge. The project now plans a campaign in the faculty to increase awareness of the effects of second-hand smoke. This is the next step in trying to obtain policy changes that will result in a smoke-free environment in the Nursing building. This experience of mobilizing the community to achieve a healthier environment through changes in policy helped the students to understand better some of the concepts presented in the literature on health promotion.

Alcohol Use program

Another program that focuses on the social environment developed out of one project student's concern about excessive alcohol use on the campus. Her survey of first year nursing students' knowledge and use of alcohol prompted a teaching session adapted to the specific learning needs identified. This student also investigated whether or not there were others on campus who were concerned with developing policies and making environmental changes to support students in the safer use of alcohol. In response to the lack of activities and resources identified, the project group collaborated with other concerned members of student services to establish a coffee house that provides a place where people from all sectors of the university community can socialize in a setting in which alcoholic beverages are not served.

Marketing

Critical to the project's success has been the marketing of its programs in the Faculty of Nursing and, in some cases, on the campus in general. This advertising campaign made use of posters, flyers, radio and newspapers. Within the faculty, advertising was directed at nursing students as both consumers and providers of health promotion services. It was soon discovered that activities were most successful in attracting participants in a busy professional faculty when they took place during class time or were part of a course requirement. This close association of the project with the curriculum requires the support of the faculty. One example of such cooperation was that of a teacher of a first-year nursing course who invited project students to share teaching with her in such areas as sexuality, life-style, alcohol use and stress management. A project participant who was interested in identifying life-style assessment tools that would be useful in the health fair examined some of the tools described in the literature and chose four to be tested and evaluated by first-year students in the class on life-style. Another means of fostering more involvement of students and faculty in project activities has been through the faculty-student advisory committee to the project. However, the most effective marketing device has been the success of project activities, especially those like the Festival of Health, which are highly visible and reach large numbers of people.

Evaluation of the Project

As a health service

At the beginning of the project, participants were confronted with the difficult problem that every health promotion practitioner faces, that of evaluating effectiveness of programs in relation to changes in the health status of the population concerned. To circumvent this problem, programs were assessed in terms of impact on health awareness, knowledge and behaviour rather than in terms of health outcomes. Faculty-wide evaluation of the impact of the project was carried out each year using a questionnaire. The greatest impact has been on awareness of project activities, but there has also been an impact on health awareness, less impact on health knowledge and least impact on health behaviours. Project students also evaluated the impact of individual programs using a variety of techniques that included comparison of experimental and control groups, soliciting reactions from participants, noting attendance at programs and monitoring changes in behaviour, policies and the environment.

Because the main goal of the project was educational, many of the service-related objectives (1-7) were stated in terms of process or professional practice. These are more readily evaluated than outcome objectives (Green,

Kreuter, Deeds & Partridge, 1980). Process evaluation carried out by the project students and faculty coordinator indicated that the project has achieved many of its service-related objectives. As the project became better known and its impact recognized, more students became involved in its activities. The health interests of the faculty population have been surveyed and some of the health risks and problems of groups within the student population have been identified. Health promotion programs have been developed to address some aspects of the health interests, risks and problems. Some of these programs were closely associated with the curriculum. In the course of developing programs, project students collaborated with other health promotion services on campus, with other health science students and with other health professionals. There have been efforts to offer limited health promotion services to members of the university community outside the Faculty of Nursing: some of the activities in the sexuality program, the health fairs and the coffee house.

As a learning experience

The project's main goal was educational, as such, its effectiveness and efficiency as a learning experience in community nursing were also evaluated at the end of the second year. No attempt was made to determine what influence the project experience had on the level of student performance in community nursing. Instead, effectiveness as a learning experience was determined by comparing the kinds and numbers of activities undertaken by students engaged in the project with those of other fourth year students. This comparison showed that, without neglecting other required experiences in community nursing, project students had more practice in health promotion than did the other students. The activities in which the greatest differences were noted were those related to developing and evaluating health promotion programs, setting up groups for health promotion and testing health promotion models and strategies. Students had ample opportunity to meet the learning-related objectives of the project (5-12) not only by developing programs but also by participating in regular project meetings in which programs were evaluated and health promotion theory and research were discussed. They reported that they appreciated practising in a setting that was strongly learning-oriented and one that gave them the freedom to be highly creative and independent.

The efficiency of the project was evaluated in terms of faculty time invested. As would be expected, additional time was needed for the coordinator to supervise students in the absence of the usual community agency personnel (almost three hours per week) and to administer a project that was not under the auspices of any service agency (two hours per week). Some of this time spent by faculty on the project can be viewed as valuable clinical practice for nurse educators. In addition, there are many research pos-

sibilities inherent in the project, which faculty might develop as part of their academic role.

As a demonstration of nursing's role in health promotion

To determine if the project had been successful in demonstrating nursing's role in health promotion within the faculty, a question to this effect was included in the impact questionnaire that was distributed faculty-wide at the end of the second year. Nursing students reported that a number of programs, especially the Festival of Health and the social and political activities, had broadened their perception of nursing's role in health promotion. No formal attempt was made to assess the impact of the project on students outside the Faculty of Nursing.

Problems and Possible Solutions

Some of the main problems encountered in developing the project were related to the fact that the sponsor is an educational institution, and not a service institution. Funding for health services is difficult to obtain in an educational setting. It is not easy to provide continuity in programming in a project that has to be reactivated each academic year. In addition, every term brings a new group of student participants with different interests that they wish to pursue. The main goal of the project is to provide practice in developing health promotion programs; therefore each group has to work through the very complex programming process, encountering many of the same problems found by earlier groups.

It is important that some continuity in programming be provided by the faculty coordinator as the dual responsibilities of facilitating learning and maintaining adequate programming are balanced. A second faculty member now shares the coordinator responsibilities and is assessing the project as a possible learning experience for students in the Master's of Nursing program. It might be feasible for the project to collaborate more closely with the university student or employee health services to provide a more permanent base for the development of health promotion programs. This arrangement would facilitate offering programs to other sectors of the university and, possibly, involve other health science students in their development.

Greater continuity and improved quality of programming would probably result from concentrating on fewer areas and recruiting fourth year students who are interested in developing those particular programs. To provide a sounder basis for determining which programs should be established, the two faculty coordinators are developing a research proposal to obtain funding to assess the health attitudes and behaviours of first-year university students.

Health promotion programs would have a greater impact within the Faculty if more students could be involved in program activities. Experience has shown that this occurs when activities are closely associated with or integrated into the curriculum. There is ample opportunity for inclusion of more health promotion strategies in a health science curriculum. Such course time use would seem to be justified when students are not only consumers, but future providers of health promotion services.

Attracting fourth year students to participate in the project as part of their community nursing experience can be a problem. The possibilities for practice in an unstructured project within their own university community do not, initially, seem as concrete or as exciting as the opportunities available with traditional community agencies. It has proven helpful to have current project participants meet with incoming fourth year students to share their enthusiasm and explain how they have been able to meet their community nursing objectives. The future assessment of health attitudes and behaviours will clearly identify program needs and will also help to define practice opportunities for fourth year students.

Review of the first three years of the health promotion project suggests that, in the course of providing valuable learning experiences to nursing students, such a project can offer needed health services on the campus, while demonstrating nursing's role in health promotion.

Similar projects might be developed by schools of nursing in universities and colleges both with and without well developed health promotion services. It is important that young adults learn to make healthy decisions in relation to life-style, environment and public policy. Students in universities and colleges can be helped to do so by nursing students who provide leadership in health promotion within their own campus community.

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RÉSUMÉ

Pratique en soins communautaires: projet de promotion de la santé de la faculté des sciences infirmières

Au cours des trois dernières années, la faculté des sciences infirmières de l'Université de Toronto a développé un projet de promotion de la santé: a) pour fournir à ses élèves de 4^e année une occasion unique d'expérience en milieu pratique, b) pour offrir des services de promotion de la santé à une plus vaste communauté, et c) pour démontrer le rôle du secteur infirmier dans la promotion de la santé. Pour commencer, les élèves ont développé des programmes s'adressant à leurs pairs qui visaient à un changement du style de vie dans les domaines identifiés parmi les plus intéressants d'après un sondage mené auprès du corps professoral; c'est-à-dire le stress, le bien-être, la nutrition et la sexualité. Les élèves eurent bientôt fait, toutefois, d'élargir leur approche pour inclure des considérations d'éléments d'ordre social, politique et environnemental affectant les comportements de la santé tels que l'usage de la cigarette et de l'alcool.

Certains programmes ont été offerts aux étudiants autres que les élèves de la faculté. Un festival de la santé a été organisé à travers le campus, en collaboration avec d'autres élèves des sciences de la santé ainsi que des services universitaires aux étudiants et plusieurs agences communautaires choisies, afin d'éveiller la conscience de la population universitaire et l'informer sur les services de promotion de la santé qui lui sont accessibles.

L'évaluation du projet comme expérience d'apprentissage démontre que les étudiants impliqués dans le projet ont eu plus de pratique dans la promotion de la santé que les autres élèves de 4^e année, surtout pour ce qui est de développer et évaluer les programmes de promotion de la santé, organiser des groupes de travail et tester les modèles.