Beyond the hospital walls: Developing partnerships and building capacity with community services

PAULINE HILL
WENDY ABIGAIL
*Flinders University*, Adelaide, SA, Australia

Work integrated learning opportunities in hospitals for undergraduate nursing students are in demand and shortfalls are common. Given that healthcare systems are reorientating toward the World Health Organisations goal of ‘Health for All’ with the focus on primary health care (Mitshali, 2005), it is vital that healthcare professionals are adequately trained and prepared to work in environments that are vastly different to hospital-based settings.

A significant capacity building exercise involved organising community organisations to provide placements for 472 first year nursing students. This paper reports on this capacity building process and the survey data from students, tutors and community host organisations about their learning, experiences and reflections from these placements.

Forty organisations (85%) provided feedback with over 90% agreeing students developed their communication skills, 80% saw development in conversation skills and 97% agreed that students learnt about community services and how they helped people to live well within the community. Over 55% of student respondents agreed they developed their observation skills, communication skills (64%) and increased their understanding of the role of community services (68%).

Significant learning about capacity building with non-traditional placement partners is now integrated into pre-placement information to support and sustain these new valuable community partnerships.

Keywords: Capacity building, work integrated learning, non-traditional placements, nursing, community partnerships, communication skills, graduate qualities, primary health care