

The Case of Perceived Connections Between Ethics and the APRN in Reducing Health Disparities

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Topic: Leading & Advancing Improvements in Health, Health Care, & Higher Education

Category: Quality Improvement/Evidence-Based Practice Project

Abstract

Background/Introduction

Ethical theories and moral principles entail duties to act or not act on the basis of whether an action is found to be right or wrong are the underpinning of the nursing practice. Health disparities harm large groups of people. People of color on average less healthy than whites which are to the detriment of whites. Autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and distributive justice are connected to health, pain and suffering, life spans, and outcomes respectively. Closing gaps in care through health disparity reduction effectively improves health outcomes.

Purpose

The purpose of this curriculum delivery was to engage students in hypothesizing health disparities as a moral wrong and exploring nursing ethics as an obligation to address the moral wrong thereby reducing remediable health disparities. This exercise allowed students to practice reducing health disparities in a standardized manner on the basis of an ethical decision tree.

Methods or Processes/Procedures

Students were assigned disparate ethical case studies that embedded health disparities for discussion. Students were given a rubric to guide preparation for writing their recommendations for presentation in small groups. Students were graded on an assessment scale of Exceptional, Capable, Developing, and Beginning.

Results

The results were mixed in that some students appreciated the opportunity to explore health disparities from an ethical lens. However, other students needed more practice to make the connection between ethics and health disparities reduction therefore those students found the opportunity challenging.

Limitations

Applying ethical principles to case studies academically stretched students owing to the diverse academic backgrounds of students at the doctoral level.

Conclusions/Implications for Practice

Applying ethical principles in a manner to manage health disparities standardizes care. As a result, standardizing quality and equitable care improves health outcomes. Avoiding work towards reducing health disparities disrupts access to care and unfavorably impacts the quality of care. Finally, perpetuating health disparities erodes the trust between providers and patients.

Biography

Dr. McCants is an expert in directing healthcare related services for various populations. The quality of the services and the equitable allocation is a topic Dr. McCants analyzes. Dr. McCants is a founder of a non-profit for which Dr. McCants was awarded a grant, a manager of radioactive dosages, risk stratification expert, and a curriculum developer in simulation. Notably, Dr. McCants worked in the Office of Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and the U.S. Attorney's Office. Dr. McCants' breadth of knowledge and diverse background positions her well to introduce an innovative and standardized approach to teach about health equity strategies.

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