



Teaching Diversity by Incorporating the Veteran Honor Flight Program Into a Public Health Nursing Course

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Objectives



- Background
- Procedure
- Results
- Limitations
- Implications for Practice

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Background

- There are more than 18 million veterans in the United States
- Almost all nurses will care for a veteran or military family member
- How can we help nursing students better understand the unique and diverse culture, issues, and health challenges of veterans?
- With a better understanding, one can care for veterans better

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Procedure

- What is the Honor Flight?
- How our students participate
- What the course looks like

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"Our Mission is to Enable Veterans to Visit the War Memorials Built in Their Honor. With Respect and Gratitude to Their Service and Sacrifice."

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Our students serve as one-on-one guardians for a veteran for the 48-hour Honor Flight trip to Washington, DC to visit the memorials built in honor of those veterans and to celebrate these heroes.



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Course Components

- Clinical practicum of a public and global health nursing course
- 0.5 credit prep class held Winter (Spring) semester
 - Learn about military culture and challenges veterans face
 - Meet Honor Flight veteran and help them with required paperwork and orientation meeting
 - Gather mail-call
- 6 credit class during Spring Term (approx. May 1-June 21)
- Honor Flight is just one experiential part of this course. Also visit DC in separate trip as an immersion in military culture
- Memorial presentation
- Veteran presentation with bio
- Reflective writing

Results

- Students learn military culture
- Strengths and challenges of this diverse group
- Clinical skills are learned, such as caring for patients with impaired mobility, sensory deficits, mental health challenges, multiple chronic diseases

Implications for Practice
To know them is to care for them better

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"This experience has changed me forever. I confidently am able to say that I am proud to be an American, and I am grateful for all the military service, women and men who gave part or all of their lives to our country. I believe that having had this experience, I will be much better able to serve any veterans. I come in contact with as a nurse. It taught me the level of respect that these men and women deserve, and that I need to treat them as the heroes that they are."

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"It was incredibly special to be a guardian and see the impact this trip had on my assigned veteran and those around us. For many of them, it was the trip of a lifetime, and it was an honor to be a part of that. I learned so much about what it means to be a veteran and all of the sacrifices they have made. As a nurse, I want to make sacrifices for them and go out of my way to listen to their experiences and help them feel loved and appreciated for all they have done for us."

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"There was a brotherhood, a community of unconditional love and support, I got to observe that I have not seen in my life before. One example is when we were visiting the Vietnam War Memorial. One veteran was standing, looking at the wall of names of those who died, with tears streaming down his face. The veteran I was guardian over, who didn't know the other one who was standing there, went over and put his hand on his shoulder and gave him a pat on the back. No words were spoken, but the love I could sense and feel was immense. The veterans treated each other as if they had known each other before, though they had just met for the first time. They demonstrated a mutual respect for individuals of different backgrounds, beliefs, or ethnicities, for property and the environment, and for someone's time."

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"Their impact on me and their example of patriotism, bravery, and selflessness will never be forgotten. In my nursing career, I want to remember that the trials my patients experience are unique and personal to them. Each one will handle it differently, but it is my job to assist them in their way of coping and help them to make the most of their circumstances, while remembering that as hard as I may try, I will never fully understand. It is my duty as a nurse to care for my patients without passing judgement for the ways they handle their circumstances."

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Limitations

- Student ability to travel
- Funding– Utah Honor Flight charges approx. \$1000 guardian fee per student
- Ability to work with a local Honor Flight Chapter

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References

<https://www.honorflight.org/>
<https://www.utahonorflight.org/>
https://www.va.gov/vetdata/Veteran_Population.asp

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A background image of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes in a slightly blurred, artistic style. The text is centered over the white field of the flag.

Thank you!
Questions?

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