



Background

- Mental Health challenges have been on the rise after the murder of George Floyd and the Covid-19 pandemic (Eichstaedt, et al.,2021).
- Mental health awareness and wellness is key for students to thrive in their academic environment.
- Safe spaces for mental health offer students' psychological safety where they can share their experiences with mental health without being judged while feeling inclusive in their academic environment (UWIRE Text, 2023).

Purpose

- The purpose of this project is to develop, implement and evaluate an innovative process, designed to diminish mental health associated stigmas by promoting education through round-table discussions
- Creating a safe space for nursing students to address experiences of stress, anxiety, depression, discrimination, trauma with peers and mental wellness professionals; and providing a space to enhance students' sense of belonging.

Aim

- Develop and implement a new mental health wellness initiative for UTMB nursing students by January 1, 2024. At least ten percent of participating nursing students in the nursing program will respond that the new process was helpful in meeting their personal mental health goals and overall satisfied with the new initiative.



Implementation Plan

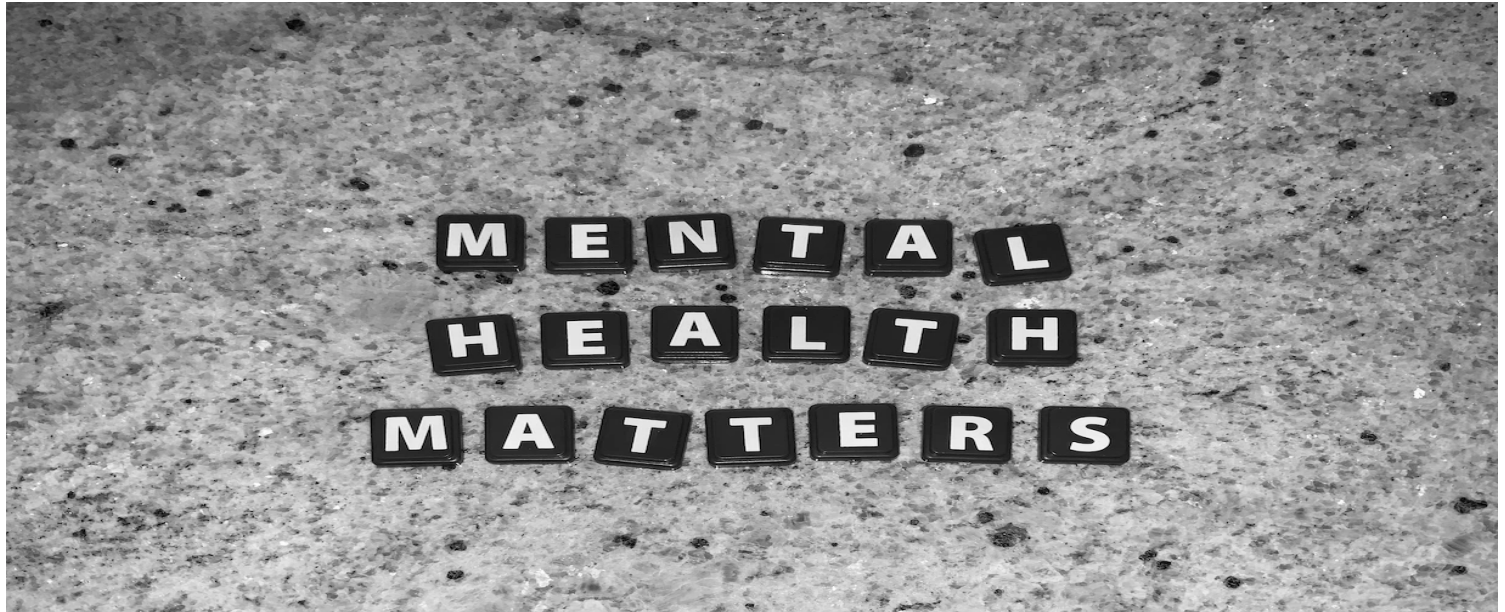
- Get approval from IRB (Institutional Review Board).
- Collaborate with stakeholders to discuss project initiatives and solicit input.
- Develop an evidence-based screening protocol that supports a validated discrimination scale tool for mental health topics.
- Design a Poster and PowerPoint with engaging information on mental health topics.
- Create an anonymous survey using Microsoft Forms to solicit questions that are uneasy for the students to ask in-person for round table discussion.
- Create virtual sessions and in-person sessions for dialogue (Safe space) focusing on students experiencing an exacerbation of stress, anxiety, and depression for undergraduate and graduate students.
- Obtain a neutral facilitator for table talk discussions.
- Refer and report any students with identified mental instability or harm to Student Health Services for a mental health assessment by a licensed psychotherapist.
- Create a Mental Health Moment to be shared via the weekly school relay newsletter.
- Develop a student satisfaction survey for measuring at midpoint and end of the academic fall semester 2023.

Results

- The results of the new process will contribute to the long-term goal of establishing a nursing student mental health wellness program that provide the inclusivity, skills, resources, and a sense of belonging for their well-being through their pathway of obtaining future nursing career which will systematically help aid the nursing workforce shortage by maintaining a healthy well-trained nurse.

Limitations

- The growth of the initiative would be limited to funding availability and current legislation related to public institutions. Students, faculty, and staff unfamiliarity with mental health awareness strategies.



Implications for Practice

- The new process can give the students an opportunity to have their voices heard on stigmatized mental health issues and engage in authenticity. The creation of a safe space is setting the stage for incorporating evidence-based methodology into practice by regularly engaging students from diverse backgrounds and serve as an exemplar for inclusive excellence and belonging at UTMB-SON..

diversity, equity, & inclusion

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

Diversity Leadership Institute: Capstone Presentations and Graduation

Creating Inclusion in Uncharted Waters: Navigating Mental Health Wellness for Nursing Students-Round Table Series

Cindy West, DNP, APRN, CRNA

Biography

Dr. Cindy West is the inaugural Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) at the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) School of Nursing (SON) and Assistant Professor in the Doctor of Nursing Practice Program. Dr. West is a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) with extensive oncology and anesthesia clinical experience. A committed mentor, teacher, and change agent, she guides learners in pathophysiology, quality improvement, translational methods, cultural literacy, and clinical courses. In addition to mentoring DNP students in their scholarly practice projects and advising the DNP Peer Mentorship Program. In addition, Dr. West is a master trainer for TEAMSTEPPS, an evidence-based communication and teamwork methodology for optimizing patient outcomes, and an active T3-Train the Trainer-Interprofessional Team Development Program participant and IPE facilitator.

She is a lifelong champion for diversity, equity, and inclusion and currently serves on local, state, and national DEI-focused boards and organizations, including UTMB Institutional Diversity and Inclusion Council, Texas Association of Nurse Anesthetist Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Taskforce, The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leadership Network (DEILN) and the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education which focuses on knowledge related to DEI principles and fostering inclusivity. She is committed to operationalizing SON DEI efforts through transparency and accountability in collaboration with existing UTMB strategies and interventions while teaching, leading, training, recruiting, and retaining underrepresented and historically excluded students, faculty, and staff.

Dr. West received the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the Workplace certification from the University of South Florida-MUMA College of Business in 2021 and DEI certification from Cornell University in 2022.

Contact Information



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