

Veterans Court Provides Undergraduate Nursing Students Evidenced-Based Approaches to Care for Veterans With Substance-Use and Mental Health Disorders

ROSALIND SCOTT WILLIAMS, DNP, PMHNP-BC
CARLA HERMANN, PhD, RN
INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTHEAST SCHOOL OF NURSING



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Purpose

- Substance abuse and mental health disorders has increased among veterans; substance use in conjunction with mental illness linked to suicide in veterans.
- IUSSON Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing program outcome: effective communicator who collaborates with interprofessional team members, patients, and their support systems for improved health outcomes.
- To address the needs of increase suicide rates among veterans, an innovative collaborative community partnership was developed while meeting program outcomes.



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Background

- AACN Essential VI has identified “Interprofessional Partnerships” for “Improving Patient Health Outcomes” as one of nine essential outcomes of baccalaureate education for professional nursing practice.
- Interprofessional education (IPE) experiences are essential for nursing students to learn team-based approaches that assist them in caring for veterans with mental health and substance use disorders.



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- Indiana University Southeast (IUS); New Albany, Indiana
- Indiana University Southeast School of Nursing
- H351 Alterations in Neuro-Psychological Health Course
- Program Learning Outcomes and Competencies
 - An effective communicator who collaborates with interprofessional team members, patients, and their support systems for improved health outcomes.



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The Partnership Development

- How did it begin?
 - In 2019, meeting Judge Maria Granger
 - Preparation meetings
 - Securing a contract
 - Presentation to the IUS Chancellor's Cabinet



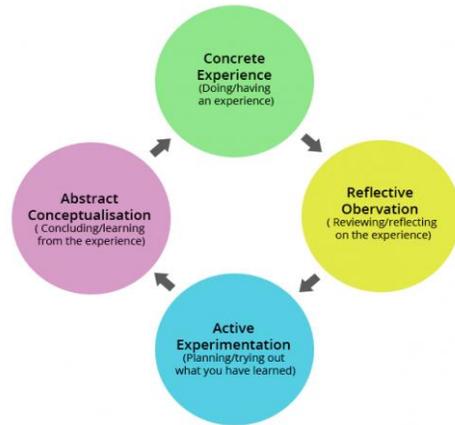
Veterans Court of Southern Indiana

- Founded in 2011, by the *Honorable Maria Granger*, Presiding Judge over Floyd Superior Court 3
- Indiana's first treatment court for Clark and Floyd County veterans facing criminal charges after military experience
- Composition
 - Team of justice and social service professionals
- Benefits



Theoretical Basis

Kolb Experiential Learning Theory



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Partnership Process

- Veteran treatment court orientation
- In-person group attendance in courtroom setting
- Synopsis of veterans' cases
- Interaction with the interprofessional team
- Evidence-based treatment approaches explored
- Mentor break-out sessions
- Group reflective writing and evaluations



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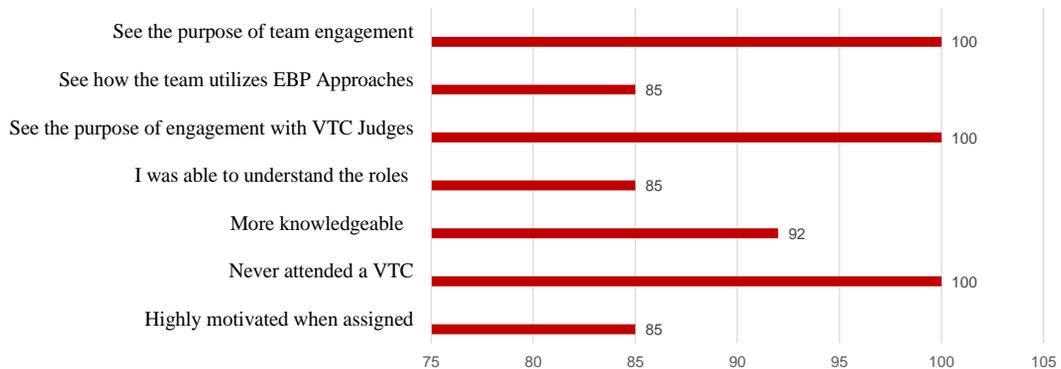
Data Collection

- Veterans Court Evaluation N=41
- Reflective Writing Exercises N=48
 - I was highly motivated when assigned to Problem Solving Court.
 - Have you ever attended a VTC?
 - I am more knowledgeable after participating in Veterans Court.
 - I was able to understand the roles of the VTC team.
 - I was able to see how the team utilizes evidence-based approaches for mental health and substance use issues.
 - I was able to see the purpose of engagement with the team.



Veterans Court Evaluation

N=41



Reflective Writing

Prompts:

- **Describe what led the veterans to be part of VTC, and its impact on veterans daily life functions.**
“The way this affects the veteran’s daily functioning interpersonal relationships and quality of life is pretty hard.”
- **Identify and explain the interprofessional team roles at team meetings and during court hearings.**
“During the morning debrief, we got to listen to all of the different people talk about their experiences in their roles.”
- **Explain community evidenced-based resources offered to participants.**
“Programs available to veterans included anger management, halfway housing, inpatient drug treatment, personal counseling, and alcohol anonymous.”
“Assertive community treatment involves clients working with a multidisciplinary team.” ; “This type of treatment eliminates the need for multiple department or agencies to provide care.”



Reflective Writing

- **Show how evidence-based treatment approaches aligned with VTC program goals.**
“Goals of the veteran court program include giving the veterans a second chance at life and regain control of their happiness by giving them better coping mechanisms than they have currently.”
“By the veterans reaching their goals the Veteran Court Program reaches its goals.”
- **Be knowledgeable of the continuum of care for substance use disorders.**
“Veterans Court assist the veterans through each step in their recovery.” “This shows the veterans that there are people who care, and they have the resources needed to succeed.”
- **Identify legal and ethical considerations for participants in the VTC**
“Veterans have the right to get treatment if they choose it. It would be an ethical dilemma to not accept someone into Veterans Court that truly wants to change.”



Group Feedback

“This experience allow us to see first-hand recovery and some struggles that these veterans face.”

“As a group we saw this to be useful educational tool for us as nursing students and recommend that the program to be continued next year.”

“Seeing the court’s therapeutic techniques come into effect and how they interacted with the veterans is much more effective than reading about them in a book. This experience was very educational and rewarding.”

“Our group was able to see the process by which these veterans transformed into happier and more healthy individuals that finally become contributing members of society.”



Group Feedback

“Being an eyewitness to the good of the program that they are doing makes us able to suggest this program if it is appropriate for a client.”

“We felt this was impactful because it is easy as nurses to want to cure everyone with pharmacological methods, but we have seen that change is rooted in behavior modification.”

“Veteran Court is an excellent addition to Southern Indiana that will help our community overcome this epidemic facing our society today.”

“A major take away for our group was a statement by a veteran: ‘We can’t take down all the drug dealers in the world, but I can change myself.’”



Revisions

- The partnership did not continue in fall 2020 due to COVID-19
- Fall 2021, initially in-person but changed to virtual
- Changes in the structure



Directions for the Future

- Partnership to be continued
- Increase community interprofessional experiences in the curriculum
- Extension of the partnership into a Family Treatment Court



Summary

- It is essential for nursing students to receive interprofessional education experiences in the curriculum that will improve patient health outcomes.
- The partnership assisted nursing students to achieve the program outcome in becoming effective communicators and collaborators through an interprofessional team approach.
- The partnership will contribute to the development of culturally competent registered nurse leaders while reducing stigma, the opioid epidemic, and mental health disparities in communities.



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