

Blameless: Using Popular Media to Prepare Nursing Students to Work with Diverse Populations

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Purpose & Background:

Nursing students care for a microcosm of society and often begin their education with limited knowledge of the cultural and socioeconomic factors that drive mental and medical illness. Creative approaches for teaching students about the social context in which illness develops is needed. The aim of this study is to deliver a nursing course using the television series “Shameless” to explore issues of social justice and equity. The research question is: Does television media facilitate understanding of social and cultural issues in undergraduate nursing students?

Methods:

This study used a mixed methods approach. Quantitative data was collected in a pilot study using an 11 question Likert scale regarding social factors and experiences on health from nine students. Subsequent data was obtained through a standardized Course Opinion Survey. The course was delivered 3 times with 34 students completing the surveys. Qualitative data were reviewed using content analysis to identify themes. Student comments were coded and analyzed for repetitive themes. Researchers came to consensus on the themes identified.

Limitations of the study were: two evaluation tools were used, the pilot course was offered face to face, subsequent offerings were in an online format, small sample size, a primarily female sample, and student self-selection. Trustworthiness: Two experienced nursing educators analyzed the qualitative data for themes and reached consensus on the findings.

Results:

One hundred percent of students who completed the survey agreed with statements regarding the positive impact the course had on their ability to understand the connection between mental and physical health, and that the course improved their ability to apply medical and psychiatric knowledge to real world situations. Qualitative analysis resulted in 3 themes: *Bringing issues to life and illuminating the material*, *Application of learning to clinical nursing practice*, and *Breadth and depth of material*.

Discussion/Conclusion:

Educators must prepare students to care for individuals of varying backgrounds and social circumstances. The use of entertainment media is a nontraditional strategy for teaching concepts that can bridge the gap between the classroom and the practice setting.

Nursing Implications:

Creative approaches to teaching students about the social context in which illness develops is needed. It would be worthwhile to explore the long-term impact of this teaching strategy on students’ values.