

Reflective Journal

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Week: 2

Date Submitted: February 12, 2020

Criteria	Reflective Thoughts
Look Back (L):	<p>Physical health should be a priority for nursing students. As they are in an educational environment where they are exposed to resources on how to physically care for others and how to educate patients on proper health, nursing students should have sufficient knowledge and skills to apply this for themselves. Looking around my classroom and at myself, this is evidently not the case. Students take the elevator to go up one floor because they get too tired walking up a single flight of stairs. No one cooks for themselves and instead opt for fast food on campus out of convenience. This lack of self-care negatively affects student performance. Being a former athlete myself, I have noticed a significant decline in my stamina and strength since I stopped exercising regularly. As a result, I have struggled with certain tasks in lab such as moving patients up in bed because no longer have enough physical strength to do so.</p> <p>Nurses put a great significance on patient safety and hygiene practices, yet we do not consider the quality of the most-utilized tool in the field: ourselves. What is the point of spending time on wound care and dressing—ensuring we are using proper, sterile technique—if we cannot safely transfer a patient, putting them at risk of bed sores or falling? Good physical health entails aspects of muscle strength (e.g., lifting patients), cardio (e.g., chest compressions), and endurance (e.g., staying on your feet all day). All those categories are vital to top performance as a nurse and not only will it increase safety for the patient, but it will also protect a nurse from injury while working (e.g., hurting your back due to twisting in a transfer).</p>
Examine Experience (E):	<p>I believe this topic is so important because it is hypocritical for nursing students to be physically unfit when we educate others on the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, nursing students should be a role model for their patients so that they will cooperate with their care and be motivated to lead healthy lives. It should be easier for nursing students since we are given the resources right in class and are not required to research basic health teaching independently. Unfortunately, many of us—including myself—prioritize other things in our lives, such as school and work, over personal health and well-being.</p> <p>Through this reflective journal, I would like to find out if my observation of a lack of physical health in University of Windsor nursing students is a common theme amongst nursing students in other areas of the world or is simply a special phenomenon unique to this campus. I hope I can apply the information I learn to myself, so that I can improve my own physical health.</p>
Appraise & Analyze the Clinical Event (A):	<p>The article I will be focusing on is a quantitative study on the physical health of nursing students in Thailand. Piyanee, Hong-Gu, and Ying (2015) gave 335 students a questionnaire and put them through a physical fitness test. Lung capacity, handgrip strength, leg strength, body flexibility, and maximum oxygen consumption were the quantitative measures of the study. Each student was scored from 1-5 in each category, for total scores of 5 (poor physical health)-30</p>

(greater physical health). Perceived physical health, psychological health, and health behaviours were qualitative data pieces collected. The students participating in the studied varied in age, income, weight, and other factors; however, 97% of participants were female.

The results for each test were an average 2.78 to 3.82 out of 5; poor to moderate scores, while the total score average for the fitness test was 19.72 out of 30. (Piyanee et al., 2015). This shows how unhealthy nursing students are. Piyanee et al. (2015) also brought up the fact that there are other factors to physical health that were not included in the quantitative test. This included factors like stress, sleep, and mental health, which through interviews, the students reported unhealthy habits in all. The researchers stress that nursing students should learn how to balance studying with self-care and that they should take advantages of programs the university offers to help with self-management.

I personally agree with the researchers. I suffer from insomnia, anxiety, and depression. All of these take a toll on my mental and physical health. The stress of the nursing program only adds to this. Last year, I spent a significant portion of my time in the library studying for my midterms. I didn't exercise or eat healthy. I noticed my health deteriorate: I could not focus well, I was tired all the time, and I was extremely irritable. This semester, I decided to prioritize my health. I started going to the university gym with my friends and noticed an immediate change: not only did I get stronger physically, but I fell asleep easily, I was less irritable, and less stressed overall. Exercise allowed me to vent my emotions in a physical way. Unfortunately, once midterms came around, I no longer could fit the gym into my schedule. All my previous symptoms have returned.

When I discuss this topic with my classmates, they express a similar attitude. Many first-year nursing students at the University of Windsor agree that physical fitness is important in this profession. However, when I recommend they join me at the gym, many decline because they don't have the time to do so. They can't afford to miss a couple of hours that could be spent studying for exams or catching up on sleep missed. It may be harsh, but it is a reality for many students. If the program could find a way to incorporate fitness into the program—maybe incentivizing working out or integrating workouts into actual courses—I believe many students would be willing to put in some effort.

Before I was a nursing student, I never considered how important physical fitness would be to my field of study. Now that I am a nursing student who has had clinical experience, I now know how applicable it is. Even thinking about other perspectives makes me realize its importance. When I am at my doctor's office as a patient, I expect my physician to be fully competent: he should have the knowledge and skills to provide care. If he failed to meet either one of those, I personally would not feel comfortable receiving care from him. He should also practice what he preaches. If my doctor was obese and was giving me health teaching on nutrition, from a patient perspective, I don't think I would be inclined to follow his advice. The same applies to nurses. We need to be mentally and physically competent, so patients trust us, and we also need to listen to our own advice, so that our patients listen to us when we health teach.

Research & Revision (R):	<p>This article showed me that there is a large problem in the nursing community in terms of fitness. It is not only present in Windsor, but there is documentation of it in Thailand, UK, Germany, and Spain (Piyanee et al., 2015). I believe this is an issue nursing regulatory bodies should address and put more research into. I would be interested in seeing research done into correlations between nurses' health and patient safety outcomes because I think there may be a link with the two. From now on, I will put more of an effort to keep myself at the highest physical competence possible so that I am always able offer my patients safe and competent care, while protecting myself from injury.</p>
New Perspective (N):	<p>The most immediate implementation I can make is to commence a consistent exercise routine including both strength and endurance-building activities. The overall goal is to maintain fitness to practice, which the CNO (2014) defines as “the necessary physical or mental capacity to practise competently, safely and ethically.” (p. 12). To cover the mental aspect, I will self-reflect regularly and decide if I meet policy standards by checking documents from CNO and other regulatory bodies. CPEs will also guide me during my practice. With these resources, I can create a plan for self-improvement.</p>
References:	<p>College of Nurses of Ontario. (2014). Entry-to-practice competencies for registered nurses [PDF file]. Retrieved from http://www.cno.org/globalassets/docs/reg/41037_entrytopracitic_final.pdf</p> <p>Piyanee, K., Hong-Gu, H. & Ying, L. (2015). Physical fitness, health behaviour and health among nursing students: A descriptive correlational study. <i>Nurse Education Today</i>, 35(12), 1199-1205. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2015.06.014</p>