2018

Nurse Practitioner Students: Providing Wellness Screenings to Underserved Older Adults

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Recommended Citation

Tatlock, Rexanna (2018) "Nurse Practitioner Students: Providing Wellness Screenings to Underserved Older Adults," *Purdue Journal of Service-Learning and International Engagement*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 1 , Article 20.

DOI: 10.5703/1288284316829

Available at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/pjsl/vol5/iss1/20>

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specializes in community engagement. Another student's future was impacted by conversations with the president of BCCC. He drew upon his network as a former district attorney to place a student as an intern with a female judge. She was later accepted into law school.

Reflection and Conclusion

The relationship between BCCC and the sociology program at IPFW has evolved over time. I came along at a time when BCCC asked IPFW to make better use of an underutilized campus facility. What caught my attention was how the collaboration suddenly flourished beyond what one might reasonably expect. For example, the initial project design did not include language translation. Blackford County is a homogeneous population. Community Harvest works with a diverse immigrant population in Fort Wayne, which is the second-largest city in the Indiana. At the request of Community Harvest, students studying foreign languages at IPFW learned that their language skills could have an immediate application. Immigrants eagerly took the plants home when they saw that the care instructions were in their own language.

To best prepare to work with this community organization, it is important for students to understand that the BCCC representative with whom they interact are board members and not staff. Students may be asked to perform tasks that normally are assigned to staff members. They should keep in mind that board members are less directly involved in day-to-day activities. Through this experience, I have come to take seriously the critiques in the literature, such as the importance for the university to listen to the community partner, because I have had firsthand observation of how application of the critique may be useful in solving real-world problems.

Acknowledgments

To my writing mentor, Dr. Sherrie Steiner, for her invaluable help. To the College of Arts and Sciences, whose funding through the START program made the greenhouse project possible. Finally, to Eric Evans, President of Blackford County Concerned Citizens, for initiating and serving as a master gardener on this project.

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Nurse Practitioner Students: Providing Wellness Screenings to Underserved Older Adults

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Student Author Bio Sketch

Rexanna Tatlock (BSN, RN, CCRN) received a BSN from Saint Francis College in 2003. As a registered nurse, she specialized in critical care nursing and eventually enrolled in the Adult Gerontology Nurse Practitioner master's program in Purdue University's School of Nursing in 2016. Upon graduation in May 2018, Rexanna has planned to focus on primary health care. The service-learning project provided primary care clinical experience, while meeting the needs of an underserved older adult population. This article will discuss the community partnership, a needs assessment, and a wellness screening offered to Fairington Apartments (FA) residents.

NP student doing blood pressure screening.

Student Introduction

Graduate students enter the nurse practitioner (NP) program as established professionals whose primary focus is care of the acutely ill. In NUR 50300, Advanced Health Assessment, there is a focus on primary care, and this is when primary care clinical experiences begin. A foundational part of primary care is wellness screening; however, the cost for screenings can often be a barrier for low-income individuals. Each semester, students in the College of Health and Human Sciences can apply for a service-learning grant. Graduate students can choose to apply for a grant; in the past, students have used funds to purchase screening supplies for Fairington Apartments (FA). In the last four years, collaboration has occurred between first-year NP students; Andrea Tonsing-Carter (FA Service Coordinator); Professor Karla Ross, MSN, ANP-BC (Assistant Clinical Professor); and Chris Rearick MSN, RN (Director of the Nursing Center for Family Health in Lyles Porter Hall).

Community Partner Description

According to the United States Census Bureau (2017), approximately 17.6% of families in Tippecanoe County, Indiana, live in poverty. Fairington is a government-assisted community, participating in the Project-Based Section 8 program; rent is based on income, age, and disabilities (A. Tonsing-Carter, personal communication, April 4, 2017). It is a 150-unit housing community for residents 62 years of age or older and/or persons with disabilities (Fairington, n.d.). Access to a service coordinator

NP student doing cholesterol screening.

who is proactive in supporting residents' needs and linking residents to resources in the community is mandated (Fairington, n.d.). Coordinators help with enrollment and maintenance of benefits, such as Medicaid, food stamps, and energy assistance. Issues related to prescription drug plans, meal delivery programs, home medical equipment, and job-coaching services are also addressed by the service coordinator at Fairington. Events and programs promote physical and mental health by offering nutrition programs, exercise classes, financial counseling, arts and crafts, healthy living classes, wellness education, and medical screenings (Fairington, n.d.). For several residents, physical disabilities, limited transportation, and limited income make access to wellness screenings difficult, so these events are important.

Opportunities and Impact

Consultations were undertaken with the FA service coordinator to assess the health needs of residents and to determine the need for health screenings and wellness education. It was concluded that certain screenings would be beneficial to residents and could be conducted at no cost. These included blood pressure, pulse, oxygen oximetry, diabetic foot, hearing, and skin cancer screenings. Approximately 50 residents requested cholesterol and diabetes screening. In a clinic setting, these screenings would cost approximately \$40.00.

The diagnoses of hyperlipidemia (high cholesterol) and diabetes are common in the older adult population. These diseases increase the risk of coronary artery disease (CAD), which is the leading cause of death in

Karla Ross (MSN, ANP-BC) and Rexanna Tatlock (NP student) setting up information table regarding health screenings.

the United States and a large contributor to health care costs (Zhang et al., 2017). Although the importance of diabetes and cholesterol screening was acknowledged, the cost appeared prohibitive. A grant was procured from the College of Health and Human Sciences to provide testing supplies that made the screening of 60 residents possible. Eight adult gerontology nurse practitioner (AGNP) students and three family nurse practitioner (FNP) students conducted two days of wellness screening throughout the FA complex.

Designated screenings included blood pressure, oxygen saturation, pulse, blood cholesterol, blood glucose, diabetic foot, ear, hearing, and skin cancer exams. Flyers were posted prior to the event to alert residents to the dates, times, and types of screenings available. Tables placed in the activity area of each building offered different wellness screenings and related educational materials. Due to difficulty leaving their apartments, students conducted some screenings in residents' rooms.

As the residents rotated to each table, tests results were recorded on paper forms. Upon completion of testing, nurse practitioner students explained the results and reviewed educational materials with residents. Some of the educational materials available were care of ear canals, earwax removal, diabetic foot care, exercise, diet, hearing loss, hypertension, stroke, and heart disease. Residents were encouraged to share health fair results with their primary care providers and follow up as needed. Professor Ross was present for supervision of

students and questions. Health maintenance was emphasized by students and supported by course material covered in NUR 50300, Advanced Health Assessment.

Reflective Conclusion

This service-learning project benefited students and residents. Students engaged with an older adult population while gaining skills and knowledge in primary care wellness screening. The project allowed students to apply technical clinical skills by performing population-focused health screenings, critical thinking skills by interpreting test results, and communication skills by engaging this population. A total of 63 residents received free health screenings in two days. Residents' ages ranged from 33 to 97, with the majority over age 65. Residents stated how much they appreciated the time and information provided by the students and stated their hope was students would return.

This project has led to further collaboration between Purdue University and FA. Purdue University AGNP and Indiana University School of Medicine students now visit residents throughout the school year to engage and work on interviewing skills. In observing that many residents had pets, this year's health screening will be followed by the Purdue School of Veterinary Medicine performing free pet wellness examinations.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank my writing and project mentor Karla Ross (MSN, ANP-BC). I would also like to thank Andrea Tonsing-Carter, Service Coordinator for Fairington Apartments Lafayette, and Chris Rearick (MSN, RN), Coordinator of Nursing Center for Family Health Clinic. Their assistance and coordination efforts helped make this service-learning project possible.

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Group shot of NP grad students.

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