Using Reflection to Promote RNB Students’ Application of Theory to Practice in an Ethics Course: What We Are Learning So Far

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Reflection is an effective strategy for helping students become more adept at aligning theory with practice. Reflection also enhances professional socialization through transformation of nursing students’ understanding of their expanding roles and enables them to move beyond emotional responses to complex health situations to more skill-based responses. As leaders in health care settings in direct and indirect roles, BSN-prepared nurses play key roles as patient advocates and are a critical component of efforts to address the increasingly complicated ethical issues confronting our society.

This study focuses on the use of reflection in the nursing ethics class and explores how students describe their movement toward an ethical practice consistent with national and professional codes and competencies. What we learn will contribute to thoughtful teaching of RNB students in ethics classes and more conscious development of their professional nursing identity and ethical practice.

We--a nursing faculty member, a nursing graduate student and a pre-med undergraduate—are conducting a thematic analysis of end-of-quarter reflective ethics papers for stories of personal and professional transformation and are assessing the usefulness of reflection and clinical narratives as a teaching/learning strategy in RNB ethics education. We are using NVivo 10 to help us display and more fully understand the themes and the possible connections between themes and subthemes.

We will provide narrative and visual examples of ways in which students describe how learning about ethics is changing their practice and their understanding of nursing. We will discuss the challenges and opportunities inherent in faculty-student research collaborations.