

THE EXPERIENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE NURSING
STUDENTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS IN
THE INPATIENT CLINICAL SETTING: A
QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Conflicts of Interest Disclosure

- There are no conflicts of interest to disclose
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Learning Objectives

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- 1. Reflect upon experiences working with nursing students with mental health conditions
 - 2. Identify the study's themes related to the experiences of nursing students with mental health conditions in the inpatient clinical setting
 - 3. Apply strategies to support nursing students with mental health conditions in the clinical setting



NLN Competencies

- Competency I: Facilitate Learning
 - Competency II: Facilitate Learner Development and Socialization
 - Competency V: Function as a Change Agent and Leader
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Survey





Case Study

It is the fall semester and you are a clinical instructor in a traditional BSN program. You have 6 junior nursing students in your clinical group on a busy medical surgical unit in a large teaching hospital. It is week 2 of clinical and each student is assigned to one patient. In the morning during pre-conference, the students greet one another and talk about their plans to study together after clinical. You notice that Student A does not talk to the other students and sits a couple of seats away from the rest of the group. After report, the clinical day begins.


Student A's assigned patient requires a dressing change for a surgical incision. Later that morning, you make a plan with Student A to return to the patient's room in 15 minutes, after Student A gathers the necessary supplies. Fifteen minutes later, you are standing in front of the patient's room, but Student A is not there. Student A arrives 10 minutes later and is empty handed.

Student A says, "Sorry I'm late. I was double checking the order for the dressing change. I didn't have time to get the supplies though. I didn't sleep well last night so I feel like I'm moving in slow motion today. I'm not trying to give you an excuse. I just can't seem to do anything right lately."

➡ **How will you approach this situation? What are 3 strategies to support this student?**




Introduction and Rationale

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- Definition: “A condition that affects a person’s thinking, feeling, behavior or mood. These conditions deeply impact day-to-day living and may affect the ability to relate to others” (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2021)
 - In 2021, more than 60% of college students met criteria to be diagnosed with one or more mental health conditions (MHCs). This number increased by 50% when compared to survey results in 2013 (Lipson et al., 2022).
 - Lack of research on supporting nursing students with mental health conditions (NSWMHCs) in the inpatient clinical setting



Overview of Literature Review

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- Clinical accommodations for NSWMHCs are infrequently provided or requested by students. (Howlin et al., 2014a; Stein 2013)
 - Faculty bias toward NSWMHCs in clinical (Epstein, 2020; King, 2019; Kucirka 2013; Levey, 2014; Luckowski, 2014; Russell, 2019)
 - Literature suggests NSWMHCs would like nursing programs, clinical faculty, and unit staff to ask students what would work best to facilitate their learning in the clinical setting (Epstein, 2020; Luckowski, 2014)



Research Questions

Central Question

- What are the barriers or problems nursing students with mental health conditions have experienced in the inpatient clinical setting?

Subquestions

- What strategies have nursing students with mental health conditions used to support their success in the inpatient clinical setting?
- How would nursing students with mental health conditions change their inpatient clinical experiences?

Sample Demographics

Sample Size	7 BSN Students from 1 public university
Year in Program	Juniors n=3 Seniors n=4
Age	18-22 n=6 23-27-n= 1
Gender	Females n=7
Race	White n=5 Black n=1 Hispanic n=1
Diagnosed and Treated for a MHC	n=7
Receiving Accommodations in Class and/or Clinical	Receiving Accommodations in Class- n=1 Receiving Accommodations in Clinical n=0


Results

- **Theme 1: Dealing with Internal and External Barriers**
- **Theme 2: Relating to Patients' Experiences, Particularly Those with Mental Health Conditions**
- **Theme 3: Sharing Perceptions with Peers to Understand Interactions and Experiences**
- **Theme 4: Using Particular Coping Skills**
- **Theme 5: Improving Over Time**
- **Theme 6: Inconsistent Faculty Interactions**
- **Theme 7: Recommended Changes**



Theme 1: Dealing with Internal and External Barriers

A: Fear of the Unknown

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- Participant 107: “I’m kind of introverted so I don’t know a lot of people in the program anyway. But going to a clinical group and seeing everybody kind of know each other right off the bat before they even get there and having that background with each other doesn’t make me upset, but it just makes me like a little sad to see everyone getting along or knowing each other. And I’m just worrying about how to interact and stuff.”



Theme 1: Dealing with Internal and External Barriers

B. Ruminates and Overanalyze

- Participant 109: "...I'll have a bad experience with a nurse and that will really stick with me the rest of the day...Just the fact that, I have a very obsessive personality. It's really hard for me, I find to brush something off."



Theme 1: Dealing with Internal and External Barriers

C. Information Overload

- Participant 103: “If I have to do something, I have to write it down because there’s been times where I’ve been asked to do something by a faculty or staff, and while I went to do that first task I would be asked by somebody else to do something else and then I would completely forget about the first task...”



Theme 1: Dealing with Internal and External Barriers

D. Inflexible Approach of Program and Clinical Faculty

- Participant 109: “I just feel like I’m not able to honor myself a lot of the time and not able to deal with my problems in the way that I feel like I need to deal with them because there’s just always something else that I have to be doing, or going somewhere. I feel like it just has taught me that I am not important. What I do is important, it’s just my mind is not important. What I get on a test is important and how I perform at clinical, that’s important. Just not what is going on inside of me.”



Theme 1: Dealing with Internal and External Barriers

E: Stereotypes

- Participant 107: "...it kind of puts into perspective of why some people don't trust getting help or anything like that because, they don't want someone behind their back saying they're crazy."



Theme 2: Relating to Patients' Experiences, Particularly Those with Mental Health Conditions

- Participant 111: “.... It brings back the feelings of a depression and it's still here of course, but the intensity of being a teen and being inpatient-it's intense to say the least. And feeling othered by the nursing program and then being inpatient...It's like being back -because I am back, but not in the same way. So it brings up the same exact feelings then and just exacerbates my MDD (major depressive disorder).”




Theme 3: Sharing Perceptions with Peers to Understand Interactions and Experiences

- Participant 109: “In my clinical this time, I was telling myself this whole time with my prior clinical rotation that I was doing something wrong. Like it was just something to do with me. I did something wrong. That’s why they didn’t like me. But I actually met another student that had the same hospital and they told me-yeah I had the same exact experience and it kind of felt like a relief to me in a way, because you know, again, it’s just not being alone.”



Theme 4: Using Particular Coping Skills

F. Preparation Leads to Progress

- Participant 103: “I try to have my medication somewhere I’ll see it. So I remember to take it. It’s something small, but it makes a big difference.”
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Theme 4: Using Particular Coping Skills

G. Activities that Help to Regroup and Recenter

- Participant 113: “I’ll just take some time to step outside and recenter myself...try to bring myself back to where I am now instead of worrying about what’s going to happen in 5 or 10 minutes. So I just kind of put myself where my feet are.”




Theme 5: Improving Over Time



► Participant 105: “For everything the strategy is just practicing. You’ll get better with practice and that has been my experience whether not only just in communication but just with interventions as well...like giving an injection or doing whatever the intervention was that I had to do that day in clinical.”



Theme 6: Inconsistent Faculty Interactions



Participant 107: "...we're just trying to get through nursing school when it's already hard enough to go through it with mental illness. But having these kinds of attitudes...condescending attitudes thrown at you, it just feels like you're going up this hill and then you get pushed back five steps."



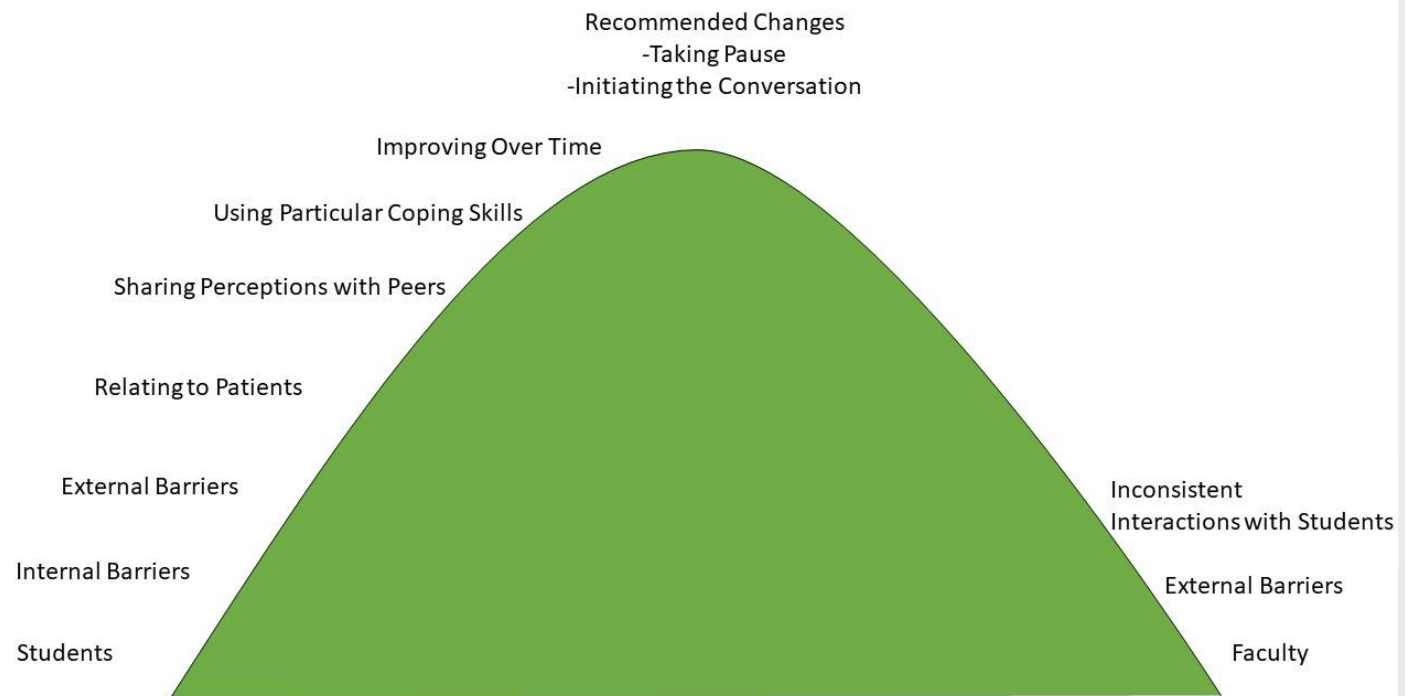
Theme 7: Recommended Changes

H. Taking Pause

I. Initiating the Conversation

- Participant 111: “Being mindful that students there might also have needs that they’re not comfortable communicating, and that they’re still there and not completely separate.”
- Participant 105: “I think of just every so often just having a check in 1:1 with each student and be like what’s going on? How can I help you? Is there anything you need to talk about?”

Illustration of Themes






Implications for Nursing Education

- Avoid stereotyping patients and people with disabilities and MHCs
- Foster peer to peer relationships in the inpatient clinical setting
- Encourage NSWMHCs to share their coping skills and express willingness to learn about them
- Facilitate growth in communication and technical skills in the inpatient clinical setting through simulation and role modeling. Reserve additional time to practice technical skills.



Opportunities for Additional Research

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- Increasing flexibility in nursing education using Universal Design for Learning (England & Lancaster, 2022; Marks & Sisirak, 2022)
 - Training for faculty on how to support nursing students with mental health conditions including education on Universal Design for Learning (England & Lancaster, 2022; Marks & Sisirak, 2022; Stubin & Hargraves, 2022)
 - Additional research on students with mental health conditions enrolled in various types of nursing programs (Owen & Pfeiffer, 2023)



Case Study

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Questions?
Thank you!