

28th International Conference on

PSYCHIATRY AND MENTAL HEALTH

November 20-21, 2017 Melbourne, Australia

Exploring the impact of mental health first aid on nursing students' knowledge and attitude: A pilot randomized controlled trial**Wai Yee Mak**

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Statement of the Problem: Many general registered nurses could lack the mental health competencies to identify and treat mental disorder. Nurses and nursing students view people with mental illness negatively. Therefore, additional education is required for nursing students. This study aimed to explore the impact of providing the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training to general nursing students and to evaluate their Mental Health Literacy (MHL) and attitude toward mental illness.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: This is a single site, parallel pilot RCT. 70 nursing students randomly assigned to intervention (MHFA plus Usual Education Practice, UEP) or UEP alone. MHFA is the education program and UEP is the clinical placement. The primary outcome was the vignette questionnaire in MHL, secondary outcomes included attitude. Assessments were conducted at baseline, post-intervention and 6-month follow-up. Intention to treat and mixed methods were examined.

Findings: Repeated measure ANOVAs suggested a strong time effect for MHFA group with partial eta-squared=0.14 from baseline to post-intervention and significant time effect from post-intervention to 6-month follow-up for attitude. Friedman tests indicated that order effects might influence three vignette responses. The ANOVAs also supported the attribution model on controllability and dangerousness. In beliefs about treatment, six categories were grouped as professional, pharmacological intervention, psychiatric assessment, therapeutic communication, problem-solving skills and psychosocial intervention. Both quantitative and qualitative data concluded the primary outcome variables were statistically non-significant because of random error.

Conclusion & Significance: This study was the first pilot RCT for MHFA for nursing students in Hong Kong. The significant tests may represent Type I and Type II errors but, using p-value 0.01 and mixed methods are effective to reduce these errors. Although non-significant results in the primary outcome it is clinically meaningful. Protocol amendments in expanding the age range and using validated tool are recommended.

References

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Biography

Wai Yee Mak is a Doctor of Health and Social Care (part time) and a student in the Department of Nursing and Midwifery, the University of West of England Bristol, UK. He is a Registered Mental Health Nurse, experienced in community psychiatric nursing for more than 20 years in Hong Kong. His current research interests are mental health first aid, mental health literacy and stigma.

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