

IN PRACTICE

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EMPATHIC CARE OF A PERSON WITH CEREBRAL PALSY: RAISING AWARENESS THROUGH CO-PRODUCED EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS AND E-SIMULATION INFORMED BY REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCE

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Introduction: Empathy enhances healthcare professionals' understanding of the experiences, perspectives, needs and feelings of patients and colleagues [1]. It is fundamental to professionalism, therapeutic relationships and person-centred care. Empathy improves patient wellbeing, satisfaction and clinical outcomes [1] and reduces the risk of healthcare staff experiencing stress and burn-out. Importantly, empathy is an antecedent to cultural competence and enables caregivers to respond appropriately, and without prejudice to the needs and expectations of patients and colleagues, several of whom will come from diverse backgrounds and/or vulnerable and groups. Approximately 15% of patients admitted to hospital have a communication disability that affects their ability to speak with and/or understand the staff who care for them [2].

A review of 27 studies identified that '...vulnerable patients with communication disabilities (i.e. impairments of body structure or function that impact upon speech, language, or communication function) face a three-fold increased risk of sustaining preventable and harmful patient safety incidents' [2, p502]. Some of the most commonly reported factors include i) 'being in hospital with no way to gain the attention of or communicate with hospital staff'; ii) '...staff who are not always attentive even when patients raised the alarm'; iii) 'advocacy failure'; and iv) 'failing to listen, or to recognise complaints of pain or symptoms of distress' [2, p509].

Methods: A collaborative approach to co-production of digital educational resources (videos and e-simulation) involving people with first-hand experience that aimed to:

- DRAW ATTENTION to the risks faced by people with a communication disability when accessing healthcare
- RAISE AWARENESS of nurses' and healthcare workers' legal and professional duty to identify, record and act on every patient's communication needs
- PROMOTE EMPATHY as a vital component of professionalism, and a skill and competency that can be learned by healthcare staff through education and practice
- DEVELOP an educational resource that could be readily accessed and used in healthcare education and practice

Results: Since production, Helen's story videos and Empathic Care of a Person with Cerebral Palsy: E-Simulation Toolkit have been embedded in pre-registration nursing curricula, shared with other health professional programmes, and the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia in the Virtual Empathy Museum's Simulation Room. Student evaluations have shown these resources help to raise awareness, address stereotypical and judgemental views, enhance empathy, and strengthen vital knowledge and understanding that enables the delivery of safe, person-centred practice for people who have a disability and complex communication needs.

Discussion: Co-produced digital resources offer powerful, practice-based tools for empathy education. Lived experience enhances authenticity and challenges bias in healthcare learning. Students report improved understanding of

empathy, communication needs and person-centred care. Resources support critical reflection on practice, helping learners avoid blame and explore influencing factors. Their integration into curricula and global platforms highlights broad educational impact.

Ethics Statement: As the submitting author, I can confirm that all relevant ethical standards of research and dissemination have been met. Additionally, I can confirm that the necessary ethical approval has been obtained, where applicable.

REFERENCES

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