Is Reflexivity the key to minimising problems in interpretative research?

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Learning outcomes for the session

- Discuss what reflexivity is and why it is important, particularly in interpretative research
- Explore reflexivity’s relationship to interpretative methodology – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
- Explore personal research conducted with health professionals from sub Saharan Africa and from the literature to increase understanding of the concepts
- Discuss how reflexivity can be applied to nursing research
Why is accurate interpretation important?
Interpretation and the fusion of horizons

Gadamer (1997)
What is Reflexivity?

‘Explicit awareness of ourselves’
Why is reflexivity so important?

- Linked to quality and credibility
- Entails willingness of researcher to acknowledge their own influence – offers transparency to methods
- We are not neutral data collecting machines
IPA and Positionality

- **Participant**
  - Positionality:
  - Context, individual experiences, values, beliefs, interests and ambitions

- **Researcher**
  - Own positionality
  - One place removed, interpreting participants words, thoughts from own perspective

The Research Interview: A Fusion of Horizons

Developed from concepts by Shaw (2011)
Abstract of MPH research

- 16 months in Malawi as a nurse educator between 2007-2010
- **2008/9** - involved in setting up paediatric pain service in Malawi
- This involved many challenges and barriers to overcome for all the health professionals involved in caring for children in pain
Abstract of MPH research

- My research aimed to give a unique insight into the world of the health professional through a dynamic cycle of interpretation via Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
- **In depth interviews with six health professionals were conducted including nurses, doctors and a health researcher**
- These were purposively sampled through a recruitment email sent to the international child health forum CHILD2015
- **Interviews took place in 2011 via the medium of Skype (no video function)**
My Positionality
Personal experiences of the benefits of reflexivity

Deep Affiliation

Knowledgeable
Experienced
Caring
Driven
Empathetic
Compassionate
Experience in Africa

The interview Fusion of horizons
Personal experiences of the benefits of reflexivity

Lack of Rapport

The interview

Fusion of horizons

Academic

Caring

Author

Uncertain

Compassionate

Experience in Africa
The literature and Reflexivity

1. Role confusion, insider/outsider – midwifery research (Burns et al, 2012)

2. Avoiding assumptions – same-sex doctor patient relationships (McNair et al, 2008)

3. Research techniques – Body image 70 years + (Underwood et al, 2010)
How can it be used within nursing research

- Thoughts partially subconscious
- Take time out – create distance
- Reflexive diary
- Support of honest research supervisor/colleague
Conclusion

- Reflexivity and self awareness are important to avoid assumptions and bias
- **Personal and recent research discussion** to aid understanding
- Many techniques to help with this process
References