Mature student nurses experiences of undergraduate higher education - Emerging themes from the literature

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Outline of presentation

• Literature review
• Background
• Definition
• Higher education experiences
• Clinical placement experiences
• Coping strategies
• Recommendations
• Conclusion
Literature review outcomes

- Identify the factors that impact on mature student nurses experiences of undergraduate higher education

- Explore the coping strategies mature student nurses use to alleviate stress and other intricate experiences

- Ascertain the essential support needs of mature student nurses in relation to other students in higher education
Background of BSc Nursing Programmes

- Development
- BSc Nursing Programmes
- An Bord Altranais (Irish Nursing Board)
  - Mature students
- National and International perspectives
• Mature student nurses are individuals over 23 years of age on the first of January of the year of application to any undergraduate nursing programme (An Bord Altranais 2011)

• This age criteria has been adopted by all third level academic institutions for pre registration nursing undergraduate courses

• O ‘Brien (2009) identifies the that “mature students are considered better for nursing because of their emotional maturity and intrinsic motivation the characteristics uniquely desirable in a highly demanding ever changing healthcare environment”
Positive experiences

• **Antecedent qualities**
  
  Caring
  Empathy
  Realism

  (O'Brien et al, Montgomery et al 2009)

• **Valuable life experiences**
  
  General maturity
  Good communication skills


• **Motivation**
  
  Personal commitment to succeed
  Learning the game

Positive experiences

- **BSc Nursing programme an opportunity**
- **Age and gender**
- **A vocation** (Montgomery et al 2009)
- **Life changing experience** (O'Brien et al 2009)
Negative challenges

- **Physical and psychologically demanding**
  
  Self esteem
  

- **Academically challenging**
  
  Study skills
  
  Academic language and essay writing
  
  Exam question preparation
  
  Assignment feedback
  
  Time management
  
  Support guidance
  
Negative challenges

Balancing home and academic life

- Time management
- Financial stress
- Childcare difficulties and other family commitments


- Life changing experience
  - Reality shock
  - Attrition

- Gender difference
  - female v male experiences
Clinical Placement experiences

- Positive and negative reactions from mature students
- Age and supernumerary status
- Perceptions of preceptors and patients
- Time management
- Financial difficulties

(Cuthbertson et al 2000; Keogh et al 2009; Montgomery et al 2009)
Clinical Placement experiences

- Fear & anxiety prior to clinical placement attendance (Kevern and Webb 2004)
- Theory practice gap
- Course expectations and university responsibilities
- Interprofessional support/relationships
- Being valued
Coping Strategies

- Identify risks  
  (Waller 2006)

- Support systems

- Welcome Programme  
  (Flemming & McKee 2005)

- Inter-connectedness between academic process and social family networks  
  (Steel et al 2005)
Recommendations

• Similar to the sociology literature
• Design a comprehensive programme to guide and tutor that addresses inequalities faced by women (finance and relationships)
• Support structures e.g. academic skills, counselling, introduction to subject areas
• Career advice for women
• Financial assistance
• Further research into male mature students experiences of higher education
Conclusion

• A paucity of research describing the Irish position
• Despite the challenges mature student nurses still enjoy the nursing programme
• Appreciation of the decision made to become a nurse is recognised as personal development with a focus on achieving an academic and professional qualification


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