

Poster 27 – 2018 Nordic Implementation Conference

Students of physiotherapy - Raised awareness of marginalization through novel practice placement

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Background

Health inequalities is of major interest at university colleges of physiotherapy. Marginalized people avoid health services due to distrust and stigmatization. It seems imperative that health workers refute a judgmental attitude towards marginalized people. Students express limited understanding of marginalized people and uncertainty in approaching them.

Project aim

The Erasmus+ project “Relevance in Practice Placements – Inclusion of Marginalized People” aims to develop new practice placement models for physiotherapy students in their work with marginalized people. The project explores how physiotherapy students experience working with people on the fringes of society, e.g. prisoners, drug abusers, people with mental health issues, and homeless people, work aimed at enabling them to support marginalized people attempting taking part in ordinary life and receiving health services. Partner organisations play an active role in suggesting relevant practice placement arenas.

Project methods

Specific novel practice placements related to health inequalities were established at both faculties in Oslo and Copenhagen and students completed practice placements working with marginalized people at homeless street football organizations, at a street hospital for drug abusers, at a community bathhouse, at a prison, and during Homeless World Cup. The students’ experiences and learning outcomes were documented using focus group interviews, and analysed using thematic text analysis.

Project results

Building relations with marginalized people was the key to increased understanding. Students explained how the educations need to increase the teaching of social inequalities in health, as well as project management skills, to improve students’ skills working with marginalized people. Furthermore, students emphasized the importance of establishing and practicing trusting relationships with marginalized people. Finally, the students expressed that a process-oriented and inductive learning environment based on mutually trusting relationships greatly supported learning and acquisitions of skills.

Preliminary or final conclusions/discussion

Students’ interaction with marginalized people in practice placements setting outside the established health services increased their knowledge about society, and established trusting relationships with marginalized people, a prerequisite for offering health services of high quality. In this process, students and teachers continuously produced new knowledge through critical exploration. In physiotherapy training programs, health inequality practice placements is relevant as part of curriculum.