



Stigmas in Patient Care: Assessing Nursing Students' Attitudes on Anorexia Nervosa

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PUBLISHED
ABSTRACT



Background: Over the past decade, eating disorders, specifically anorexia nervosa, have become more prevalent. Anorexia nervosa can result in serious medical complications, requiring nursing care and follow up. Patients with anorexia nervosa sometimes feel stigmatized by healthcare providers, which can result in treatment avoidance, poor quality of care, and worse prognoses.

Objectives: To increase nursing students' preparedness to treat patients with anorexia nervosa through education.

Methods: A cross sectional project was done to evaluate nursing students' attitudes towards patients with anorexia nervosa. A pre-test (Eating Disorder Stigma Scale), followed by an educational presentation, personal vignette, and post-test were administered to evaluate whether the education had an impact on the attitudes of nursing students.

Results: Twenty-seven students with a mean age of 26 years participated. Following the educational intervention, most participants disagreed with the statements that patients with eating disorders are seeking attention and are to blame for their condition. Participants showed a statistically significant positive change in attitudes towards individuals with anorexia nervosa after educational intervention ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusions and Implications: This project showed that evidence-based educational interventions can positively impact the attitudes of nursing students towards individuals with anorexia nervosa, which may lead to a reduction in stigmatization of this condition. Further implications call for an introduction of similar interventions into the nursing curriculum and into continuing education courses for practicing nurses.

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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Caplan, L. (2023). Stigmas in Patient Care: Assessing Nursing Students' Attitudes on Anorexia Nervosa. *Practical Implementation of Nursing Science*, 2(2), pp. 9–10. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29024/pins.47>

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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*Practical Implementation
of Nursing Science*
DOI: 10.29024/pins.47

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Submitted: 08 November 2023

Accepted: 08 November 2023

Published: 21 December 2023

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