Levels of Empathy in Healthcare Profession Students

Ashley Tegge
Illinois Wesleyan University

Noel Kerr, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc

Part of the Nursing Commons

http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc/2015/oralpres9/1
LEVELS OF EMPATHY IN HEALTHCARE PROFESSION STUDENTS

Ashley Tegge and Noel Kerr*
School of Nursing, Illinois Wesleyan University

Empathy is viewed as a central component in effective healthcare provider-patient relationships. There is evidence that health profession students lack empathy. A cross-sectional survey was completed to identify whether there is any relationship between empathy levels in health professions students who have or have not identified a projected specialty upon entry into practice, and compare these findings between baccalaureate nursing, psychology, pre-medical, pre-dental, pre-physical therapy, and pre-occupational therapy majors. A 28-item questionnaire was completed by a convenience sample of 202 students with declared majors in the health professions of interest. There was no significant difference between students of all majors who had or who had not indicated a projected specialty. Empathy levels in nursing students with a projected specialty were significantly higher than those of students in all other majors with projected specialties. Gender and age significantly influenced empathy levels between students of all majors with a projected specialty. These findings expand the current understanding of empathy and what may influence empathy levels in students planning to enter healthcare. Suggestions for future research are described.