

RCN Education Conference Abstract 2025

Authors: Dr David Hunter, Senior Lecturer, Adult Nursing, Community & Health, UWS Lanarkshire

Maggie Hogg, Lecturer, Adult Nursing, Community & Health, UWS Lanarkshire

Title: The experiences of LGBTQ+ student nurses in the West of Scotland

Topic Area: Innovations in Inclusive Education

Submission type: Concurrent paper

Aim (100 words max)

This concurrent session aims to share the findings of a piece of qualitative research on the experiences of LGBTQ+ student nurses. The authors were keen to explore how LGBTQ+ student nurses navigate their programmes of study and the support which is available to them. With 50% of programmes leading to registration occurring in clinical practice, it was important to include students' experience from both a university and practice learning perspective.

Abstract (300 words max)

Background: There appears to be little published literature around the experiences of LGBTQ+ student nurses. Articles were located around the experiences of student nurses caring for LGBTQ+ patients, or their attitudes towards them, but very little around the experience of being an LGBTQ+ student nurse. An inclusive curriculum also came up during literature searching. One article, over thirty years old, by Stephany (1992) highlighted that gay and lesbian nursing students may choose to hide their true identity or allow assumptions that they were heterosexual to go unchallenged, due to fear of any repercussions. Clarke (2017) reported similar findings, that LGBTQ+ student nurses negotiate if and how their sexuality is revealed and that this varies between the practice learning or university environments. There is a clear gap in the literature to further explore this topic both in general, and from a Scottish perspective specifically.

Methodology: The methodology used in this study was Exploratory-Descriptive Qualitative research, as described by Hunter, McCallum and Howes (2019). This methodology is appropriate when there is little or nothing known about the topic under investigation, as was the case here.

Methods: Following ethical approval, purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants. Despite two rounds of recruitment (one year apart) we managed to only secure 7 participants. Data was collected via individual face-to-face interviews, conducted online using the Zoom

platform. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, using the built-in functionality already on Zoom. Transcribed interviews will then be analysed thematically, following the guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021).

Findings: Data analysis has commenced and will be completed in time for conference.

Implications: Our initial impression of the data suggests that implications will exist for both education and clinical practice regarding how to support LGBTQ+ student nurses during their programme of education and beyond.

Learning Outcomes (100 words max)

To understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ student nurses during their time in the university setting.

To understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ student nurses during their time in the practice learning experience.

To task delegates to consider how they already support LGBTQ+ student nurses, recognising each unique lived experience and potential areas for growth.

Recommended Reading Titles (100 words max)

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77-101.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2021) *Thematic Analysis: a Practical Guide*. London: Sage Publications.

Clarke, D. (2017) 'What's it like to be a gay male nursing student?', *Nursing Standard*, 31(23), p. 35.

Hunter, D. J., McCallum, J. and Howes, D. (2019) 'Defining Exploratory-Descriptive Qualitative (EDQ) research and considering its application to healthcare', *GSTF Journal of Nursing and Health Care*, 4(1), <http://dl6.globalstf.org/index.php/jnhc/article/view/1975>

Stephany, T. M. (1992) 'Faculty support for gay and lesbian nursing students', *Nurse Educator*, 17(5), pp. 22-23.