Co-designing the Future of Nursing Drug and Alcohol Education with Experts by Experience

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Introduction / Issues: Despite substance dependence being a significant public health issue, nurses receive little drug and alcohol education. Research suggests that nurses can hold stigmatising views towards people with substance dependence, perceiving them as manipulative, drug-seeking, criminal, and potentially violent. These attitudes can deter people who use substances from seeking health care.

Method / Approach: Involving experts by experience, people who have lived experience of substance dependence, service use and advocacy, can improve nurses' perception of service users, particularly if they are involved in the co-design and co-delivery of nurses' drug and alcohol curriculum. This presentation will present a program of co-designed educational research to improve drug and alcohol education for nurses. It provides an overview of the first phase, which involved a team of experts by experience, senior nurse clinicians, and academics co-designing, co-delivering and co-evaluating a drug and alcohol undergraduate nursing subject.

Key Findings: The evaluation of the undergraduate subject indicated that the co-design approach supported students to challenge stereotypes about substance dependence; understand the social-political factors that lead to the criminalisation and stigmatisation of drug use; and commit to collaborative care, harm reduction, and respectful language as the cornerstone of good drug and alcohol nursing care. We also present our recent efforts to co-design a drug and alcohol education program for nurses working in clinical practice.

Discussions and Conclusions: Co-design has the power to positively transform nursing students' attitudes about substance use, which is essential for improving healthcare outcomes for service users.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Co-design is the gold-standard approach and will arguably be the future of healthcare education and service provision for marginalised populations.