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| **Title of Innovation in policy and practice presentation** From Art to Empathy: A successful alliance between public health nursing students and people living with dementia |
| **Setting/problem**A partnership between a community-based Alzheimer’s group and novice nursing students with a public health focus. In Alzheimer’s care, it takes increasing creativity to keep family at home, out of ill-equipped and over-taxed care facilities, and do it with an ever-dwindling pool of resources. There is also a struggle to educate students to both the concrete and compassionate sides of community health nursing, and to encourage students to stay engaged and hopeful through the stresses of their content-laden undergraduate programs; though curious and interested in the theory of nursing, students are having difficulty identifying with their clients/patients due to large age differences and fear over interacting with unfamiliar diagnoses. Out of a desire to address the concerns of both stakeholders, a partnership was created between undergraduate community health nursing students and community-based seniors living with dementia.**Intervention**The creation of a partnership between the Alzheimer Society of Calgary and the University of Calgary that focuses on the implementation of innovative, evidence-based, arts- and humanities-based community programs. These intergenerational programs are created from a growing body of evidence that art therapy and other forms of self-expression can improve the physical and psychological wellbeing of people with dementia, and play a role in the health of the caregiver, thereby allowing families to stay together and be cared for at home.**Outcomes**People living with dementia hold enormous creative potential, and arts-based programs have provided an opportunity to build their confidence, create meaningful relationships, and strengthen their autonomy. Their caregivers are offered respite and legacy projects they can be proud of. The programs enacted have allowed for growth, reflection, and engagement of the next generation of nurses, as well as the creation of therapeutic relationships between novice nursing students and their partners. The empathy and the communication skills that the nursing students developed were remarkable, and remained evident as they progressed through their program. **Implications**Consideration of further alliances and changes in policy that allow for a focus on both health and the arts, as a way of sustaining care and ensuring future health equity in times of resource austerity. **Preferred presentation format**Oral Presentation |