

Original Article

## Suffering as a Means to Enhance Experiential Learning

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### Abstract

**Background:** There is a need for nursing curriculum to not only reflect content (the knowing) as an outcome but to also embrace the creation of safe places to foster dialogue (the being) as process; recognizing that both process and outcome are intertwined as pedagogical goals. Challenging students to think about how they would be (ontological), recognizing there are no right or wrong (black and white) answers, that life is often lived in the “grey” can be fostered through narratives as a learning strategy.

**Aim:** The aim of this study was to examine the efficacy of a combined teaching and learning strategy (vodcast and narratives) to replace a traditional lecture to enhance experiential learning focusing on the concepts of caring, suffering, and ethical dilemmas.

**Results:** Out of the 135 students enrolled in the course a total of 109 participated in the research study for a response rate of 80.7%. The plural teaching strategy (the vodcast, journal articles, and case studies) introduced for the research study was overwhelmingly beneficial for many students; the opportunity to review the content multiple times, peer inspired content, and convenience to balance school and life responsibilities were seen as advantages by participants.

**Conclusions:** What began as an initial discussion between nursing students (who were struggling to ensure their practice was safe, ethical, and competent) and faculty initiated a journey which provided richness of practice, both education and clinical, to all who were involved. Increased awareness by faculty to intentionally integrate caring, suffering, and ethical dilemmas concepts into a classroom setting may enhance the student’s future practice by preparing them as competent, conscientious, and compassionate nurses.

**Key words:** caring, nursing education, narrative learning, suffering, vodcast