

## EXPERIENCE REPORT OF A TEACHING INTERNSHIP IN THE PSYCHIATRIC NURSING AND MENTAL HEALTH FIELD

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### ABSTRACT

This study reports the experience of graduate students during the teaching internship at an undergraduate course, from September to December 2012. It was conducted in the discipline "Mental Health Nursing II", at the fifth semester of the undergraduate Nursing course of Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). This discipline introduces care in the mental health services, from the perspective of the Psychiatric Reform and the psychosocial mode. The discussions and findings of this experience report were based on the reflection by the graduate students. The internship field was the Psychosocial Care Center - Alcohol and other Drugs (CAPS AD); in this setting, we conducted practical activities, discussions in thematic seminars, and group supervision. We noticed a search for dialogue between theory and practice in the interaction between graduate and undergraduate students, the establishment of a bond, and spaces aimed at discussions on the theme psychosocial care, in addition to the search for overcoming anxieties and difficulties, something which shows that the teaching and learning process is dynamic and unfinished.

**Keywords:** Mental Health. Nursing Education. Psychiatric Nursing.

### INTRODUCTION

Currently, we can observe in the mental health field various changes on knowledge, practices related to mad people and madness. Previously focused on the asylum context, resorting to exclusionary and inhuman practices, the reform has allowed the mental health field to rethink the subject, her/his life context, her/his rights and needs <sup>(1)</sup>.

The Psychiatric Reform is a transformation movement in the mental health field which, in order to get to the subject, aims to deconstruct mental illness. It seeks to demonstrate that the problem is not curing madness, but the need for unique approaches to suffering, quality of life, for sociability, and the use of new spaces for care, which do not reinforce stigmata and prejudices <sup>(2)</sup>.

The changes introduced by the reform and witnessed by society constitute a redefinition of the way how health services are organized and relate to each other. Far away from the asylum, as an exclusionary and segregationist

place, currently, the reform is anchored in strengthening the alternative services, community-based, located in the territory where the individual lives <sup>(3)</sup>.

From this perspective, the Psychosocial Care Centers (CAPS) were born as strategic services in the reformation process in order to replace the asylums, arranged in certain geographic territories and proposing a new reasoning for care, subject-driven, aimed at caring for free individuals and based on the perception of human existence. Among the CAPS modalities, there is the Psychosocial Care Center - Alcohol and other Drugs (CAPS AD), that aims at psychosocial rehabilitation, social inclusion, and humanized care for drug users, constituting a reference service to treat these people <sup>(4-5)</sup>.

This way, the epistemological and practical changes in mental health care, influenced by the Psychiatric Reform and the psychosocial mode paradigm, require from the professor a reconfiguration of the education process. This means that the undergraduate Nursing courses must associate curriculum reform to

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replanning of their activities through the new objects of training, which are the community services, the subject's reality, and the territory as a space for producing subjectivities <sup>(6)</sup>.

We realize the need for including the graduate student, as a prospective professor, into the debate on nurse's training, taking into account the new settings resulting from the reformation movement and the need for resituating the teaching/learning process in order to revitalize the humanized care, close to people with mental disorders. It is within this scope that we regard the teaching internship at the undergraduate course as one of these opportunities.

The Graduate Program in Nursing of Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (PPGenf/UFRGS), following the guidelines of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Level Personnel (CAPES) <sup>(7)</sup>, regulates the teaching internship as a learning experience for the prospective professor. In the case of the MS course, the teaching internship is equivalent to 30 hours; in the PhD, the workload is 60 hours.

The teaching internship is among the mechanisms deployed in the graduate course context which can generate actual opportunities for the teaching practice, from the moment of planning activities to the time of executing them in an active and creative way, providing the MS professionals with a better training to face the numerous challenges to be overcome for a more qualified Higher Education <sup>(8)</sup>. Thus, we think that the teaching internship is an important step in the graduate Nursing student's training, not only strengthening her/his ties to university teaching, but also to the contemporary training of nursing professionals, always connected to population's actual needs and to new trends of the Brazilian health policies.

Regarding mental health policies, the current guidelines reflect and confirm the need for encouraging teaching, research, and science outreach practices which favor new attitudes of professionals with regard to care

for the individual undergoing psychic suffering <sup>(9)</sup>. This means that the teaching practice in mental health should be related to the psychosocial mode, with services that constitute alternatives to the asylum, according to the assumptions of the Psychiatric Reform and the subject's completeness, taking into account that only a portion of this consists of the burden of mental suffering.

Given the above, we report in this study the teaching internship experience of two graduate Nursing students in the mental health nursing field.

## METHODOLOGY

This is an experience report of two graduate Nursing students during the teaching internship conducted in the discipline Mental Health Nursing II, offered at the fifth semester of the undergraduate Nursing course of UFRGS.

The School of Nursing of UFRGS has, in the curriculum of the undergraduate Nursing course, three disciplines in the mental health field: Mental Health Nursing I (90 hours), Mental Health Nursing II (150 hours), and Mental Health Nursing III (30 hours).

The discipline Mental Health Nursing II has a theoretical and practical design, with a workload of 150 hours. The classes take place on Thursdays and Fridays in the afternoon and they aim to improve knowledge through teaching situations which allow the student to understand and provide care in the mental health services, in order to cause changes on thinking, feeling, and acting. It is worth highlighting that, in the discipline, the student experiences changes on public policies in mental health, such as the provision of mental health care through concepts such as sensitive listening, bond, embracement, accountability, integrality, territory, and teamwork.

The internship fields are varied, appreciating the mental health care network. Thus, the professors work at CAPS, psychiatric inpatient units in general hospitals,

Basic Health Units (BHU), and units of the Family Health Strategy (FHS). Based on the contemporary guidelines of mental health policies, the discipline does not conduct internships in the psychiatric hospital, since this institution focuses only on the disease and it does not provide people with psychic suffering with integration, inclusion, and citizenship.

At the first week, the teaching plan, the *modus operandi* of the discipline, and the group of professors are presented to students. As the list of fields offered is made available from the enrollment time, the student already knows her/his field when classes begin. Once at the field, the student does not rotate: she/he starts and ends at that place, appreciating the idea of bond with the user and the team.

At the second week, students come into contact with theoretical concepts related to the Psychiatric Reform, the psychosocial mode, and the mental health network. The debates take place in classroom. This moment is regarded as crucial by the group of professors, in order to contextualize and equip the student for the reality of new services, community-based.

At the third week, students start the internship, being supervised by the professor responsible for the field. Altogether, nine professors participate in the discipline Mental Health Nursing II, each of them in a specific field.

The participation of students in teaching started at the first week of classes, covering the planning activities and the execution of these activities. In the planning phase, the graduate students prepare a teaching plan, required for admission to the teaching internship, which needs to be approved by the department concerned. This teaching plan defines the activities for which the students will be responsible, and they are directly supervised by the field professor and the tutor at the graduate course. In this case, the same professor was playing both roles.

The execution of teaching activities occurred from September to December 2012, within the practice field of the CAPS AD. At the end of each internship day, the graduate students had a debate with their tutor, in order to analyze the experiences of that day, refer or focus on some specific situation observed in the field and in contact with the undergraduate students. This way, the experiences here pointed out emerged from the organization and analysis of this material.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The CAPS AD, the internship setting, is located in one of the sanitary districts in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. This service operates in an area with high social vulnerability in the city, and it has a team with about 10 professionals, such as social worker, nurse, psychiatrist, psychologist, occupational therapist, nurse technician, resident, and undergraduate student. The users attending the service have different profiles, and most of them faced problems with alcohol, followed by crack and cocaine.

The practical activities were conducted two days a week (on Thursdays and Fridays), in the afternoon, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. The internship group consisted of 5 undergraduate students, the graduate students tutor, and the 2 graduate students concerned, who changed shifts.

Thursdays were the days with greater movement in the CAPS AD, usually there were two groups: the Therapy Group and the Minor Offender Group. The first group consisted of users of the service who face problems with alcohol and other drugs. It operates by means of an approach focused on preventing relapse. In turn, the Minor Offender Group consists of adolescents who are serving socio-educational measures at the Foundation for Socio-Educational Assistance (FASE). In addition to the groups, there also were embracement sessions, home visits (HV), and activities for familiarizing the team

with the users. Thus, students were encouraged to move through settings, interact with users, and participate in activities in an organized manner.

Fridays were aimed at conducting thematic seminars and group supervision. The graduate students and their tutor led the seminar and the undergraduate students discussed and shared their knowledge on certain mental disorders. The following themes were discussed: schizophrenia, affective mood disorder, alcoholism, psychoactive substances, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, somatoform disorders, dissociative disorders, and eating disorders. The seminars lasted around two hours and the aim was studying the theme defined for that week, searching for materials, and debating with the other colleagues. These activities were carried out at the field, and not in the classroom, in order to encourage joining practice and the themes studied on a theoretical basis and to strengthen the inclusion of undergraduate students into the service context.

In turn, group supervision by the professor and the graduate students constituted a useful space for students to present and discuss the activities conducted during practice in the service. It was noticed that the undergraduate students longed for this moment, since it was also a space for expressing feelings, such as anguish and dissatisfaction.

We believe that the supervision proved to be a responsible and welcoming space, getting the professor closer to the student's reality. This is a time when students express their viewpoints, too, think through the care context, and discuss cases. We believe in the power of these spaces, in order to remove the professor from the role of knowledge holder; she/he is rather a mediator of the learning process<sup>(8)</sup>.

Acting to mediate the seminars and the supervision, we regarded them as very important moments for knowledge construction. This is so because the undergraduate students were protagonists in

these spaces and main people responsible for seeking themes and conducting the debate. That is, in addition to the traditional teaching/learning practices, when the professor has a ready-made content, the student was encouraged to tell her/his experiences at the field, besides collecting scientific materials (books, articles) able to enrich the theoretical debate on a certain content.

It is worth emphasizing our great expectation and anxiety with regard to the contact with the student, especially at the onset of field activities. We had some difficulty to know the way how behaving in face of the students, what we should speak on a specific basis, when and how we should act. These are doubts common to teaching interns, as pointed out by another study on the subject<sup>(8)</sup>, but they are overcome during the internship.

We notice that, at the onset of practices, many students had difficulties to interact and move through settings, difficulties for understanding the service, especially with regard to the proposal of working from the perspective of subject's will, harm reduction, and construction of connected therapy plans, appreciating the role of the multidisciplinary team. Throughout the internship, these issues could be debated and deepen, based on the guidelines of the Psychiatric Reform and the psychosocial mode.

We noticed, in the students, strong roots in the idea of prohibiting drugs, often relating drugs to moral and criminal issues. These issues were observed during activities in the services, where, after the embracement actions and during supervisions, the students explained how uncomfortable they felt in face of the idea of reducing health problems, they did not believe the strategy was effective, and they put into question to what extent this approach could provide users with benefits. The students thought that the best approach to the drug user was aimed at abstinence.

These issues were worked on throughout the internship. We provided students with the

theoretical material on the strategy of reducing health problems, pointing out its theoretical frameworks and discussing the various interpretations on it. It was debated that reducing health problems does not exclude abstinence, but it seeks to resume ethical and human aspects of the relationship between the subject, the drug, and its circulation in the territory<sup>(10)</sup>. Often, the subject's wish is aimed at abstinence, and this is also based on a strategy for reducing a health problem.

Throughout the internship, we tried to work by appreciating the subjects' individualities, leading students to think through the moral/criminal issue related to drugs in society, seeking to deconstruct prejudices and make the undergraduate students closer to the theme, in order to stimulate a humanized and interactive practice along with the service users.

We notice that, faced with the setting of teaching practice, it is a must to visualize the demands showed by the students, since lack of confidence and anxiety usually occur during unfamiliar situations. Thus, we think that the "new" should be regarded as an important and rich challenge for constructing knowledge, turning these obstacles into something that instigate and provoke tensions which prove to be beneficial for students.

This way, it is important to highlight that each student has her/his own subjectivities and, therefore, people show significant differences with regard to each other. So, it is important to appreciate and pay attention to these singularities expressed by students. Given this subjective involvement with the student throughout the process, it was possible to realize that we were breaking with traditional trends in the mental health field and approaches to drug use, which exclude, segregate, and marginalize the subject.

## CONCLUSION

The field for including professors and students into this report was mental health care. For this, it is crucial to resume the importance of teaching aimed at the Psychiatric Reform, characterizing the psychosocial mode as opposed to the asylum mode, the new model of mental health care designed by means of the CAPS AD constitute an alternative device to care for the drug user. Thus, the teaching internship was conducted to create possibilities for the undergraduate students to make contact with the ideas and practices of psychosocial care.

It was noticed that the teaching internship constitutes an important step for training a master, providing the graduate student with a contact to the universe of undergraduate students, the difficulties and possibilities of the teaching/learning process.

In this process, we realize that anxiety and expectations are common to prospective masters, besides, there is a need for creating skills and possibilities to construct an adequate and safe space to encourage participation, movement, and reflection on the part of students.

We understand that using seminars and supervision at the field, as a pedagogical tool during the teaching internship, proved to be a unique feature in the teaching/learning process, considering that they sought to strengthen the participation of students, promoting their autonomy and critical reflection on the challenges of the service and the mental health policies.

Thus, our report aims to contribute to thinking/doing in nursing, reflecting new teaching ways and strategies which solidify the importance of undergraduate student's participation as a major actor in her/his own learning process, providing her/him with a "voice" and listening to their anxieties, doubts, and wishes, so that we can achieve a more open and humanized health care training.



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**RESUMO**

Este estudo relata a experiência de alunas de pós-graduação durante o estágio de docência em curso de graduação, de setembro a dezembro de 2012. Foi realizado na disciplina Enfermagem em Saúde Mental II, no quinto semestre da graduação em Enfermagem da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). Essa disciplina apresenta o cuidado nos serviços de saúde mental, na perspectiva da Reforma Psiquiátrica e do modo psicossocial. As discussões e os achados deste relato de experiência foram baseados na reflexão das mestrandas. O campo de estágio foi o Centro de Atenção Psicossocial - Álcool e outras Drogas (CAPS AD); nesse cenário, foram realizadas atividades práticas, discussões em seminários temáticos e supervisão grupal. Percebeu-se busca de interlocução entre a teoria e a prática na interação entre mestrandas e acadêmicos, o estabelecimento de vínculo e espaços reservados para discussão sobre o tema atenção psicossocial, além da busca da superação de ansiedades e dificuldades, o que demonstra que o processo de ensino e aprendizagem é dinâmico e inacabado.

**Palavras-chave:** Saúde Mental. Educação em Enfermagem. Enfermagem Psiquiátrica.

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**RELATO DE EXPERIENCIA DE PRÁCTICAS DE DOCENCIA EN EL ÁREA DE ENFERMERÍA PSIQUIÁTRICA Y SALUD MENTAL****RESUMEN**

Este estudio relata la experiencia de alumnas de postgrado durante las prácticas de docencia en curso de graduación, de septiembre a diciembre de 2012. Fue realizado en la asignatura Enfermería en Salud Mental II, en el quinto semestre de la graduación en Enfermería de la *Universidad Federal do Rio Grande do Sul* (UFRGS). Esta asignatura presenta la atención en los servicios de salud mental, bajo la perspectiva de la Reforma Psiquiátrica y del modo psicossocial. Las discusiones y los hallazgos de este relato de experiencia se basaron en la reflexión de las estudiantes de maestría. El campo de prácticas fue el Centro de Atención Psicossocial - Alcohol y otras Drogas (CAPS AD); en este escenario, fueron realizadas actividades prácticas, discusiones en seminarios temáticos y supervisión de grupo. Se percibió la búsqueda de un diálogo entre la teoría y la práctica en la interacción entre estudiantes de maestría y académicos, el establecimiento de vínculo y espacios reservados a la discusión acerca del tema atención psicossocial, además de la búsqueda de la superación de ansiedades y dificultades, lo que demuestra que el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje es dinámico e inacabado.

**Palabras clave:** Salud Mental. Educación en Enfermería. Enfermería Psiquiátrica.

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