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**USING PHENOMENOLOGY TO
EXPLORE STUDENT NURSES
EXPERIENCES OF SPIRITUAL CARE**

Aims

- ◉ To outline the meaning of spiritual care
- ◉ To explore phenomenology as a research methodology
- ◉ To discuss the lived experience and lifeworld as aspects of phenomenology
- ◉ To review this study looking at how student nurses learn about spiritual care
- ◉ To show some examples from the research
- ◉ To discuss benefits and considerations of phenomenology

Background

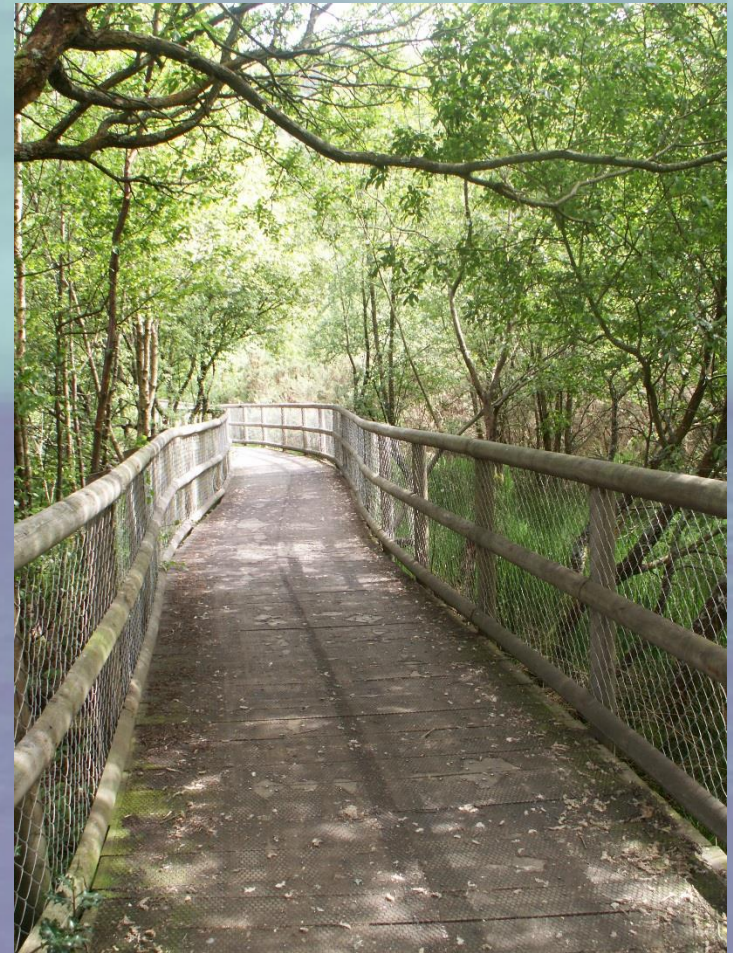
- Spirituality and religiosity are difficult to define and there is overlap between the two concepts
- Spiritual care is a pluralistic concept - *“human search for meaning”* and *“carers will need to develop approaches and methods that enable them to deal with existential quests of people in times of illness”* (Swinton & Pattison 2010 p235)
- Thus, spiritual care is individualistic, taking many different expressions
- Evidence that student nurses feel unprepared to deal with patients spiritual needs (Cooper et al 2013)
- There appears to be lack of education on the topic of spiritual care (Lewinson et al 2015)
- Thus, I was interested to explore how student nurses develop understanding about spiritual care

Terms

Background to study

Phenomenology

- ◉ Explores the phenomenon of lived experience
- ◉ It is seen as a 'human science' as examines people and their lifeworld
- ◉ Lifeworld considers a variety of aspects such as social, cultural, work, personal aspects that affect experience
- ◉ Premise that each person's experience is unique
- ◉ Meaning for the person is important



Phenomenology and spiritual care



- As spiritual aspects are very individualistic and pluralistic phenomenology embraces the unique experience of people
- Therefore, phenomenology enables the exploration of complex topic areas that are not amenable to 'natural science'
- Thus, a qualitative methodology
- Methods used include interviews, life stories, narratives.

Phenomenology types

- ◉ Debate about whether phenomenology is purely describing the lived experience or interpreting it.
- ◉ Most authors think that the researcher will interpret or be influenced by their own lifeworld. Different views about how this is acknowledged.
- ◉ Descriptive tends to focus on objective
- ◉ Interpretative tends to recognise the subjective element
- ◉ Van Manen (1997) uses a combination and is more pragmatic in its approach so has been widely used in nursing

Research study

- ⦿ Participants – student nurses, all years invited from Adult, Child and Mental health branches
- ⦿ Semi-structured interview – recorded and transcribed
- ⦿ Ethics approval from the University
- ⦿ Potentially sensitive topic so not specifically asked about their own spiritual views
- ⦿ 10 students participated



Analysis

- ⊙ Looking at existential themes
 - Lived body (Corporeality)
 - Lived space (Spatiality)
 - Lived time (Temporality)
 - Lived human relations (Relationality)
- More recently added
 - Lived things (Materiality)
 - Lived Cyborg Relations (Technology)
- This analysis is currently in progress
- ⊙ For this presentation I have focused on experiences students discussed that are pertinent for critical care nursing
- ⊙ These act as exemplars or 'stories' that demonstrate the variety of spiritual care activities

Exemplar 1

- I was in Intensive Care and we had an older gentleman and he came in and he had quite rapid onset of Motor Neurone Disease. And he was a very very active man prior to coming in sort of cycling 30-40 miles three times a week. And his one wish was to go outside. So as a team we got everything ready, the Oxylog, the ventilator, everything portable, we took him downstairs and outside. But that was just for him being able to go outside and it was the one thing he wanted so like as a whole, holistically it doesn't seem like very much but for him to go outside and have that, it really boosted him and it was really part of his acceptance and things like that. It was really nice.
- *INT: And you saw that as his spiritual side?*
- Participant 4:
Yes because it's what he really connected with, like being outdoors and things like that. So it was something that we could fulfil that was beyond the clinical things. (Participant 4)

Thoughts - Exemplar 1



- This student showed the spiritual is about meaning for the person
- She had a mentor that went out of her way to meet this patients need
- There was connection with nature – the ‘lived space’
- There was ‘giving of time’
- Focus on the individual

Thoughts – Exemplar 2

- This next student related a previous experience where he had not known what to do
- He had been challenged in a teaching session about why he had not done anything
- This had changed the way he dealt with this experience
- This led to the following extract to meet individuals' spiritual need



Exemplar 2

- we had a gentleman with palliative care, he was a very very devout Muslim. And we knew he was going to die in hospital.. And I was very very much aware that there are particular customs regarding the final offices for a Muslim who had died. In particular the fact that the body has to be washed and prepared by a member of their own faith and we did not have a single Muslim member of staff on the ward. And this caused me quite a bit of concern to the extent that I made a particular point of getting myself in touch with the local Imam chaplain at the hospital and I spoke with him, got some advice from him and the next time the family attended I made a point of taking them into the family room and discussing what their wishes were because their father was unable to communicate his wishes by this point. And at that point to my relief I found out that several friends of the family, who were male and therefore were able to perform the final offices, had already come forward to discuss with the family that they would attend. I made a point of making sure that all the ward sisters and the ward staff were aware that when the time came for the final offices, we were to contact certain friends and members of the family and that they would come. And that we would just quietly close the door and await their arrival and not do anything to disturb the body. (participant 6)

Contrast

- ⦿ However, not all students are comfortable with the spiritual being included within practice: one said that it wasn't talked about
- ⦿ This depends on their own beliefs and 'lifeworld', some seemed more comfortable to ask patients than others. Many talked about communication with people and respecting their wishes
- ⦿ Spiritual still a diverse term – holistic, individual, diverse, complex, subjective

Views on spiritual

- *The spirituality of the person is different to the religion. So the religion could be Jewish or Christianity or Hinduism. Spiritualism is the well-being of the individual, what they have followed throughout their life, whatever makes them happy (Participant 8)*

Someone who made no reference to particular beliefs

- *I'm a Christian and so religious and religious terms I'm perfectly fine with. But I'm also conscious that there are many people that may not terms themselves as Christians or even term themselves as religious but yet they would say that they are spiritual people. They think and contemplate that there is something somewhere bigger than they are and they think and contemplate that they are more than just a physical body and there is something deeper than that. (Participant 1)*

Someone who identifies with a religious tradition

Limitations

- ⦿ This study was only in one university setting. However, it is whether the findings seem credible and transferable to other contexts that is important in qualitative research
- ⦿ Van Manen recognises that a different interpretation is possible and I have looked at this in one particular way, others may examine the data in different ways
- ⦿ I am still in process of analysis and writing this 'vocatively' which is key process in phenomenology

Conclusion

- ⦿ Phenomenology allows in-depth exploration of experiences. The subjectiveness is seen as beneficial as adds depth of meaning.
- ⦿ This study shows that students learn from examples in practice so important to role model spiritual care as part of holistic practice.
- ⦿ Difficult to predict the dilemmas students might face so possibly simulation could be used to promote discussion about spiritual care

References

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