Stream: A: Pedagogic Research

Submission title:
Social media in nursing and midwifery education – a mixed study systematic review

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Background: Social media is being explored in nursing and midwifery education to determine if this technology can support learning across a variety of settings (Booth 2015, Schmitt et al, 2012). The aim of this mixed study systematic review was to synthesise evidence on the use of social media in nursing and midwifery education.

Method: A sequential explanatory synthesis approach was used for this mixed study review. Five bibliographic databases; PubMed, MEDLINE, CINAHL, Scopus and ERIC were searched for English language primary research studies relevant to using social media in nursing and midwifery education to enhance learning. No date limits were applied (O'Connor et al, 2017). Titles, abstracts and full papers were screened. Selected studies (n=14) were assessed for quality and relevant data extracted. Data synthesis occurred in three sequential phases, with quantitative and qualitative data analysed separately and then integrated to provide a conceptual framework illustrating learning via social media (Pluye & Hong 2014).

Results: Several key themes emerged from the findings of the review. Digital literacy, digital accessibility and a well organised social media activity can help ensure a successful outcome. Social media can support students to acquire new knowledge (e.g. clinical subjects, professional role, exam preparation, personal interests) and skills (e.g. communication, digital, research), refresh their existing understanding of topics and synthesise past and present learning in several ways. It appears that learning is enhanced by the interactive nature of social media as it allows students to dynamically share, discuss and clarify information online in numerous formats with student peers, faculty, professionals and others. The speed of this interaction can also be beneficial as instant feedback and advice can be obtained but the quality of this information can be problematic. Being able to access social media at any time also enables students to control the pace and process of learning and the relaxed virtual environment seems to encourage engagement, as it is more associated with student culture than traditional forms of education. However, some students do not want to use social media for learning or experience technical, social and other barriers that prevent them doing so effectively.

Discussion: This review highlights how social media can support nursing and midwifery education. It also identifies knowledge gaps and makes recommendations on how to capitalise on this novel technology to improve learning in higher and continuing education.

References

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