

**Study Title:** Exploring the experience of nursing students with specific learning differences/disabilities in clinical practice.

Universities are required to have resources for supporting students with disabilities and to make 'reasonable adjustments' in relation to academic work. In the United Kingdom (UK), there is, however, a requirement that 50% of nursing courses are delivered in practice where it is the mentors who facilitate learning and support students. The practice component of the programme is, however, often challenging for nursing students with additional needs and it would appear that clinical areas are not as well equipped or aware of the needs of these students as would be expected (McPheat , 2014).

It is apparent that implementing adjustments in practice can be complex and requires a multi-disciplinary approach, this requirement is often not met as universities and practice areas often work in isolation with the student in the middle (Tee et al., 2010). Further although registered nurses act as mentors for these students when in practice there is a dearth of literature around mentors perceptions and understanding of the range of disabilities that have the potential to disadvantage student nurses if they are misunderstood or ignored. This study reports early findings and considers both nursing students and mentors' perspectives on support provided for students with disabilities in clinical practice. Participants included students with an acknowledged disability and mentors from a range of practice settings who volunteered to participate.

A qualitative method was utilised and individual as well as focus group interviews provided the data for analysis. Analysis continues currently using a framework by Braun & Clark (2006) but early findings suggest that an unwillingness to disclose by students remains an issue and barrier for mentors willing to help, as well as a lack of understanding of how mentors can increase their own knowledge on the subject. The knowledge base of some mentors re: disability legislation requirements and willingness to engage in reasonable adjustments can also be problematic.

The key outputs from this study will be recommendations to enhance student experience by producing recommendations for university and practice placements regarding provision of support for students who require reasonable adjustments in practice.

#### **References:**

Braun, V., Clark, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2), 77-101.

McPheat C. (2014), Experience of nursing students with dyslexia on clinical placement, *Nursing Standard*, 24 (41), 44-49.

Tee S. and Cowen M. (2012), Supporting students with disabilities – Promoting understanding amongst mentors in practice, *Nurse Education in Practice*, 12, 6-10.

#### **Researchers:**

Isabel Dosser (Lecturer and disability role contact/School of Health & Social Care)

Janis Ross (Lecturer and disability role contact/School of Health & Social Care)

Elise Gibbons (Disability and Inclusion team)

