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The Impact of Transformative Learning through a Study Abroad Experience on Nurse Practitioner Students Caring for Marginalized Populations in a Developing Country

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Introduction

- Study abroad offers an experience unlike any other, while also allowing students to gain clinical hours
- Nurse Practitioner students^{1,2}:
 - Adapt to different settings
 - Become immersed in a culture
 - Grow professionally and personally
- Provides enhanced awareness of marginalized populations who lack access to healthcare³
- Given limited resources, students are challenged to critically think and problem-solve³
- NP students who participate in study abroad have increased practice competency scores and feel more confident in caring for a culturally diverse population⁴
- Students show increased self-efficacy, self-awareness, and social responsibility through the transformative learning experience^{1,5}
- Theory of transformative learning can be applied to study abroad experiences which then result in perspective transformation that inspires future action⁶



Methods

- A graduate NP program developed a study abroad medical mission program in partnership with Guatemala Relief and Compassion Efforts (GRACE) Ministries
 - Only about 54% of rural populations in Guatemala have healthcare needs met
 - Guatemala doesn't have the economic ability to provide healthcare services to all
 - Little access to prenatal care and high maternal mortality rates
- 15 NP students attended along with 4 faculty



- Students were asked to complete a pre- and post-departure survey that included Foronda's Transformation Scale⁷
 - 15 items scored on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree)
- Students participated in 4 clinics in rural areas of Guatemala in which over 700 patients are seen over the course of 4 days
- Students also have cultural immersion experiences through visiting the home of a lay midwife, going to a local school, and touring a national hospital.

Results

- Means for almost all items (n=14) on Foronda's Transformation Scale increased from pre-departure to post-departure
- Faculty sought to quantify the transformative process that often occurs during a life-changing study abroad experience
- 9 students completed both the pre- and post-departure survey
 - 4 WHNP, 4 PNP, 1 AGACNP/FNP
 - All female
 - All spoke English, 2 also spoke Spanish

Survey Item	Pre-Departure Mean	Post-Departure Mean
I feel comfortable interacting with individuals with a culture different from my own	3.66	3.88
I can relate to diverse individuals as we are all part of the same global community.	3.44	3.66
I can empathize with those individuals living in developing countries	3.77	3.88
I have assisted in the underserved global community	2.77	3.88
I have a plan to help those in developing countries in the distant future	3.11	3.44
I am financially privileged	3.22	3.66
I respect individuals who live in poverty	3.66	3.88
I can empathize with those living in poverty	3.33	3.77
I am a culturally humble person	2.88	3.44
I prefer to interact with those who share my cultural background.	1.77	1.88

Conclusions

- Students felt they served those in a marginalized, underserved community
- Involvement in experience sparked interest in aiding others in the future
- Immersing students in rural, poverty-stricken villages transformed their perspective on their own financial situation and ability to empathize with those living in poverty
- Experience throughout the study abroad experienced helped students to reflect on their own biases and perspectives of other cultures and become a more culturally humble provider



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