

How can we prepare civilian nurses to care for military veterans?



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Context

- Brief overview of a paper published in Nurse Education Today (Cooper, Andrew and Fossey, 2016)
- Publications in nursing education is scarce regarding care for an increasing veteran population (Beckford and Ellis, 2013)
- Available research is dominated by US publications
- Shift away from only thinking about veterans' needs in terms of mental health to a more holistic approach



Educating nurses to care for military veterans in civilian hospitals: An integrated literature review

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ABSTRACT

Background: In the UK, military veterans will receive care by civilian nurses in civilian hospitals. We propose that the nurses providing this care require an understanding of the unique experiences and specific health needs of veterans to deliver evidence-based care.

Aim: To conduct an integrative review of published literature to explore how nursing programmes prepare nurses to care for the military veteran population in civilian hospitals.

Review methods: A systematic search was undertaken of a range of electronic databases, Google Scholar and hand searching of Military and Veteran health journals. Papers that focused on education of civilian nurses about veteran health and included primary research or description of practice-based innovations were included in the review.

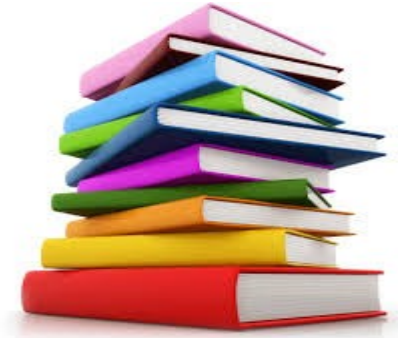
Results: The search generated sixteen papers that were focused on nurse education in higher education institutions. Several papers focused on simulation as a teaching method for veteran-specific health issues or curriculum developments with educational innovations such as online courses. Six papers focusing in continuing professional education of nurses in the clinical setting were included as supplementary information. All papers reviewed were US focused and dated between January 2011 and September 2015. Our search concluded that there is a gap in knowledge in this subject area within a UK context, therefore our review includes UK background information to support the US findings.

Conclusion: Civilian nurses need educational preparation to deliver the best care for veterans. Education

Background

- Recent run of combat theatres – Iraq, Afghanistan
- Greater medical advancement resulting in higher survival rate of veterans
- Interested in primary research and practice-based interventions
- The US have a veteran specific healthcare system through their Veteran Affairs Dept. Veterans have to have a named issue in order to access this support – argument for increased rate of PTSD in this veteran population?
- UK veterans are returned to the NHS system on discharge from the Armed Forces – issues with waiting lists for a transient population

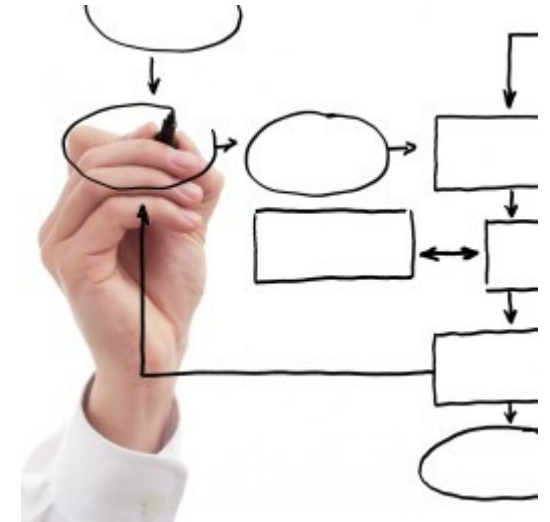
The use of an Integrative Review



- Integrative review approach - papers that focused on the education of nurses about veterans' health, primary research or practice-based innovations
- Integrative reviews allow investigation into a variety of method. Applicable to practice and policy (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005)
- The integrative review differs from a systematic review (*ibid.*)
- Of the 544 papers returned in the initial literature search, only 16 were specific to nurse education in relation to veterans – all US based

Flow chart results

- Initial search (n=41)
- Removal of 6 duplicates (n=35)
- 9 records excluded base on title and abstract (n=26)
- Articles excluded based on being PTSD specific, satisfaction surveys, nursing attrition, VA specific and not generalizable, veterans transitioning into nursing programmes – 10 papers (n=16)
- **16 FINAL PAPERS INCLUDED IN THE REVIEW** specific to nurse education in relation to military veterans. All were articles generated from the US
- Nurse ed in HE institutions (n=9), Continuing professional education (n=7)



Headlines



- UK Military veterans receive healthcare in civilian NHS hospitals (unless they have private healthcare), unlike the US system which also has the veteran specific VA scheme
- Little research data exists concerning educational innovations for teaching nursing students of veteran-specific healthcare needs
- Simulation/reconstruction techniques are frequently used in US to provide education in clinical settings, providing an insight for student nurses into the healthcare needs of veterans (Anthony *et al.*, 2012; Nye, Keller and Wrenn, 2015)
- There is a lack of empirical studies in UK/NHS settings, all evidence evolves from the US
- Nurses and students working in civilian settings need an understanding of veteran-specific health issues to deliver evidence-based care

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