Supporting nurses’ transition using WhatsApp

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Transcending into practice can be exciting, but also challenging and traumatic. Despite the necessary training and assessment of student nurses, a period of additional support is considered essential to help these nurses settle into their new role and responsibilities. There is, however, no standardized, well-structured, evidence-based, and professionally focused education and social support program of transition in South Africa.

This qualitative, exploratory comparative study focused on the experiences of new nurses about a WhatsApp support group. A total of 63 newly graduated nurses in community service were purposively selected. Divided into rural and urban groups, they participated in a three month structured group discussion based on identified needs. Thereafter in-depth interviews were conducted with 12 participants (6 rural and 6 urban). Data were analysed using content analysis. Trustworthiness was established and ethics approval was obtained from the university.

Participants benefitted from collegial shared experiences and support received during the program. They developed resilience and confidence by being connected with colleagues from school and acknowledged that content of discussion was relevant to their personal and professional development. The challenges reported varied between urban and rural groups. They recommend that this group should be continuously used in supporting new nurses.

The findings indicate the benefits of WhatsApp groups in supporting nurses in transition; however, there are a range of factors which are reported to affect the successful use. Rural participants need more support that their urban counterparts. The findings of this study will inform the development of an online transitioning program to further support new nurses during transition.

Biography
Professor Felicity Daniels has worked in the higher education for the past 23 years. She is the Deputy Director and Coordinator of the Masters Nursing (Education) programme at the School of Nursing, University of the Western Cape in South Africa. The undergraduate programme at this school of nursing is the largest in Africa and has approximately 1000 students in any given year. Her main areas of interest are learning and teaching; and programme development and evaluation. She has successfully supervised masters and doctoral students, has a growing publication record, and has presented her work at local, national and international conferences.

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