

Place-Based Practice: A New Zealand Rural Nursing Study

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Abstract : Rural nursing is not an identified professional identity in the UK, unlike the USA, Canada, and Australia which recognizes rural nursing as a specialty scope of practice. In New Zealand rural nursing is an underrepresented aspect of nursing practice, is misunderstood and does not fit easily within the wider nursing profession and policies governing practice. This study situated within the New Zealand context adds to the international studies' aligned with rural nursing practice. The study addresses a gap in the literature by striving to identify and strengthen the awareness of and increase rural nurses' understanding and articulation of their changing and adapting identity and furthermore an opportunity to appreciate their contribution to the delivery of rural health care. In addition, this study adds to the growing global rural nursing knowledge and theoretical base. This research is a continuation of the author's academic involvement and ongoing relationships with the rural nursing sector, national policy analysts and health care planners since the 1990s. These relationships have led to awareness, that despite rural nurses' efforts to explain the particular nuances which make up their practice, there has been little recognition by profession to establish rural nursing as a specialty. The research explored why nurses' who practiced in the rural Otago region of New Zealand, between the 1990s and early 2000s moved away from the traditional identity as a district, practice or public health nurse and looked towards a more appropriate identity which reflected their emerging practice. This qualitative research situated within the interpretive paradigm embeds this retrospective study within the discipline of nursing and engages with the concepts of place and governmentality. National key informant and Otago regional rural nurse interviews generated data and were analyzed using thematic analysis. Stemming from the analyses, an analytical diagrammatic matrix was developed demonstrating rural nursing as a 'place-based practice' governed both from within and beyond location presenting how the nurse aligns the self in the rural community as a meaningful provider of health care. Promoting this matrix may encourage a focal discussion point within the international spectrum of nursing and likewise between rural and non-rural nurses which it is hoped will generate further debate in relation to the different nuances aligned with rural nursing practice. Further, insights from this paper may capture key aspects and issues related to identity formation in respect to rural nurses, from the UK, New Zealand, Canada, USA, and Australia.

Keywords : matrix, place, nursing, rural

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