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A qualitative study of the ethical practice of newly graduated nurses working in mental health

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ABSTRACT

Despite nurses having legitimate ethical rights and responsibilities, they are often constrained in practice from acting in ways they believe to be morally correct. This thesis presents a qualitative exploration of factors that influenced eight newly graduated nurses as they endeavoured to practice ethical mental health nursing in New Zealand. Data was gathered from in depth interviews with the participants and analysed using a thematic analysis method. A critical lens was employed to view the data so as to make visible aspects of the social and political context within which the participants were situated.

The participants' moral practice was profoundly influenced by a number of relational experiences they had. These relationships were then determinants in their moral development, professional socialization and their ability to practice in accordance to their moral beliefs. Key aspects of these relationships were their experiences with nursing education and the influence of the organisations where they worked. Recommendations are made to both areas to enable and support moral nursing practice for new graduate mental health nurses.

New graduate nurses inherently desire to practice in a way that honours the client and is therefore inherently ethical. Moral nursing practice is an everyday occurrence that must be situated in a culture of respect and regard for both clients and nurses. New graduate nurses have much to offer the profession and the tangata whaiora of the mental health services. They must be valued and supported to act in accordance to their moral ideals.

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