

“Walking in their Shoes”: The effectiveness of a digital story intervention on empathy in nursing students

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Introduction: Empathy is a concept acknowledged in nursing curriculum, health and care policies, and professional codes of conduct in many countries. However, no consistent evidence demonstrates that empathy is being taught and measured effectively in nursing and other professional groups.

Aim: To test the effect of a novel digital story intervention on empathy in nursing students

Methods

- Design: a randomised controlled trial with three phases
 - **Control group:** received a routine lecture only
 - **Intervention group:** received the same lecture + a ‘Story Walk’
- Participants: 2nd year nursing students at University of South Wales
- Data collection: 3 times using Jefferson Scale of Empathy
- Data analysis: repeated measures ANOVA using linear mixed effects models and permutation tests

Intervention: ‘Story Walk’

- Comprises of a story from a patient recounting her experiences of being in hospital, the impact of the hospital surroundings on her and her interactions with health professionals
- 9 digital audio clips (some with still images) were created and linked to QR codes, accessed using smartphone technology
- Clips were organised on a map to follow the patient’s pathway.
- Originally designed to be accessed as a story walk through a CTUHB hospital, for practical reasons the clips were embedded in 9 locations in the USW Clinical Simulation Suite.

Results

- 238 students were recruited (138 in control group; 100 in intervention group)
- At baseline, no significant differences in empathy between the groups were found ($p = 0.760$).
- At post-test, empathy was significantly higher in the intervention group (M: 118.76, SD: 10.65) than it was in the control group (M: 114.60, SD: 15.40) ($p = 0.012$).
- At follow-up, there were no significant differences in empathy between the groups ($p = 0.364$).

Conclusion: The intervention resulted in a short-term increase in empathy in nursing students. However, further development of effective intervention delivery modes is needed to sustain this improvement over the long term.

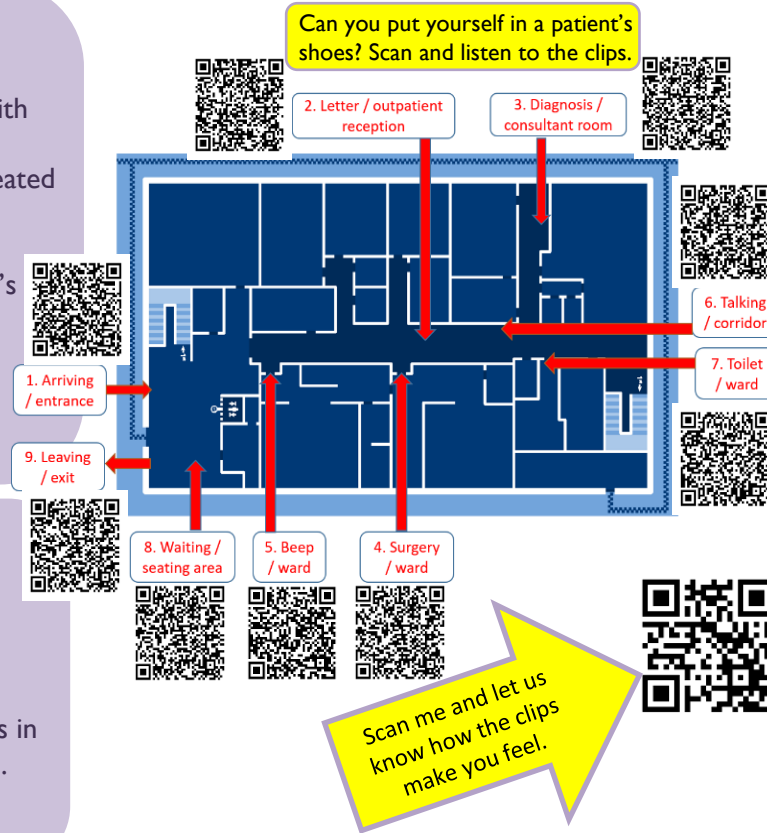
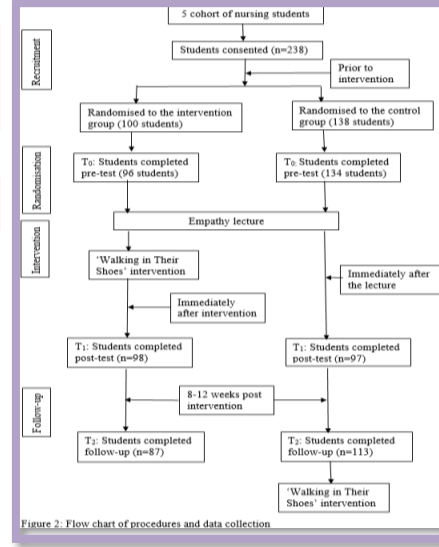


Table: Empathy scores (T0: pre-test; T1: post-test; T2: follow-up)

	Test	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Number
Control group	T0	111.97	13.45	39	140	134
	T1	114.60	15.40	42	137	97
	T2	113.66	13.82	65	140	113
Intervention group	T0	112.13	11.33	87	137	96
	T1	118.76	10.65	83	140	98
	T2	114.83	13.79	76	140	87

Yu J, Parsons GS, Lancaster D, Tonkin ET & Ganesh S (2021) “Walking in Their Shoes”: The effects of an immersive digital story intervention on empathy in nursing students. *Nursing Open* 8(5), 2813-1823. Doi: 10.1002/nop2.860

