

“Keepers of the House”- A Unique Medical Curriculum in Teamwork and Empathy

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ABSTRACT

We are developing a curriculum module to illuminate the remarkable ways in which hospital housekeepers care for their patients, and to bring this important work to the attention of healthcare professionals. The curriculum centers around a 20 minute documentary video. In the video, eight housekeepers at Duke Hospital and Duke Regional Hospital talk about their special human relationships with patients and the ways in which they believe their work contributes to healing. Upon completion of the film, its impact on an interdisciplinary student audience will be assessed.

BACKGROUND

Every day of the week, environmental service workers enter hospital patients' rooms to clean. Their work may bring a measure of dignity and connection to people who are sick, vulnerable, and away from their familiar homes. Because these workers are assigned to the same specific areas of the hospital, they often develop meaningful relationships with patients. While the roles of housekeepers in the support of patients and their families are a potential source of vital health information, this is neither widely understood nor appreciated.

METHODS

For its premiere showing, the documentary will be screened to an interprofessional audience of students from medicine, physical therapy, physician assistant and respiratory therapy programs. Participants will be asked to complete the following scales and surveys: the Toronto Empathy Scale (TES), the Implicit Association Test, a pre-documentary viewing survey, and a post-documentary viewing survey. Participants will also take part in focus groups after the film showing. The data obtained will be used to assess the impact of the film on implicit bias and stereotypes about housekeepers, and on levels of empathy.

FUTURE DIRECTION AND SUPPORT

The premier showing of the film will be held in Spring, 2019.

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FILM EXCERPTS



“I’ve been a housekeeper for Duke for 8 years, ..., and what made me do what I do in my daily routine as a housekeeper is just because of the patient and when I see that, the smile that I bring on their faces, and making them feel better each day, by me just coming in saying something, and making them comfortable, and making them happy that they see me each day, and I do it because it’s a lot of work that I love to do, and as long as I can help, in my daily routine, I’m helping you recover from whatever you here for.”- Barbara Myers, Duke Hospital



...”they’re fascinated with my accent and they’re always asking me ‘where you from’ I say ‘Jamaica’ then we talk about food, we talk about music, “..... “Sometimes the patients and I will sing together, like Bob Marleyand we’ll sing together ‘don’t worry, about a thing, cause every little thing is gonna be all right.’ And they’ll sing with me, you know most of them do know that song”- Lorna Fashola, Duke Hospital



“”The patient started talking about the family that she doesn’t have, , and every day when I came in I was trying to engage with her and make her feel better and make her feel like she’s not alone and every day she was happy to see me, and she says ‘you bringing sunshine in my room every day.’ And we still calls me for Christmas, New Year’s, Valentines and Mother’s Day to tell me how she’s doing, how she’s improving, and she told me that it’s been a lot of help, because she says ... we need the doctors and the nurses, but sometimes other people within another department can bring the sunshine in the room when you need it .” Maybelline Barahona, Duke Regional Hospital

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