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Into the Blue: Development and Implementation of Nursing Study Abroad Blue Zone Experiences in Sardinia, Italy and Ikaria, Greece

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Background and Objectives: Blue Zones are areas of the world where, according to studies performed by National Geographic and other experts, people live measurably longer, happier lives with lower rates of chronic disease and a higher quality of life than they do in the United States. There are five identified Blue Zones and there are nine common characteristics among these five locations, the Power 9. These common characteristics include information pertaining to diet, exercise, relationships and spirituality.

Methods: A nursing professor, along with nursing students, traveled to Sardinia, Italy in May, 2017 and Ikaria, Greece in May, 2019 to explore the culture, lifestyles and ultimately the Power 9 at work. In both locations, students visited and interviewed centenarians in their homes, visited local markets and stores, met with longevity experts, visited wineries and olive oil mills, participated in a cooking class and visited Blue Zone villages. They experienced typical celebrations, meals and social activities. The professor would like to share the experience as well as development of the program and course.

Results: The overall aim of these visits was to research the Blue Zones and draw conclusions about the Power 9 characteristics by interviewing, observing and analyzing. Students immersed themselves in the cultures and brought back information to the local university community and community as a whole. The plan is to implement Blue Zone ideals locally and potentially to implement the Blue Zone Project with the help of the Blue Zone experts.

Conclusions: Visiting the Blue Zones was extremely valuable for nursing students in bringing health promotion ideals back to the community and to patients in a variety of settings. Also, this was an important introduction to qualitative research techniques such as interviewing and qualitative analysis.

Biography

Jessica Naber, RN, PhD, has been teaching at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky for 13 years. She graduated from Murray State in 2002 with her BSN. She then moved to Louisville where she worked at Jewish Hospital in Critical Care while she attended Bellarmine University. In 2007 she received her MSN in Education from Bellarmine. She worked in home health until she began teaching at Murray State in 2007. She graduated from University of Tennessee, Knoxville with a PhD in Nursing in 2011. She teaches Fundamentals of Nursing and clinical, as well as Philosophy of Science, Theory and Research at the doctoral level. Her research areas of interest include nursing education, critical thinking, writing in nursing courses, Blue Zones and health promotion and legal and ethical issues in nursing. She lives in Murray, Kentucky with her husband and three children, Sydney (14), Aubrey (11), and Collin (8).

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