

Writing Exemplars

Presentation Notes: Nurse Action Days (2006)

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Objectives

- Define the characteristics of an exemplar.
- Differentiate an exemplar from a case study.
- Identify strategies for exemplar development.
- Engage in the process of sharing clinical stories.

Introduction - Definitions

- An exemplar is a story of a real patient that is told in order to illustrate an RN's practice. The exemplar is written in the first person. It describes in detail a particular clinical situation that includes the nurse's thoughts, feelings, intentions, actions, critical thinking, and decision-making process.

UMHS Professional Development Framework Website

- An exemplar is "a story about your clinical practice that conveys something memorable, or something you remember as important, significant, or that comes to mind periodically." It is "a story about a patient that conveys something you remember as important or significant and illustrates your clinical practice." Patricia Hooper-Kyriakidis, 2003

Storytelling

- The word "story" derives from the Greek and means knowing, knowledge and wisdom.
- Stories help people gain knowledge about various situations and values.
- The art of storytelling is focused on a desire to connect with listeners in a meaningful and purposeful way, regardless of the audience composition/size.
- One of the best ways to share values is by telling a story that is an example of the professed values.
- A story connects the storyteller with the listeners/readers because the human experience related is common to us all. Yoder-Wise & Kowalski, 2003

What is a Story?

- An account of a concern in which the storyteller shares what matters to THEM in the situation.
- It is an account of what they understand and believe to be important, relevant, and worth talking about.

- One's skill of involvement or level of engagement make it possible to have stories
- The storyteller reports their thoughts, feelings, and experiential knowledge of an event

What Constitutes an Exemplar?

- A situation in which you feel your intervention really made a difference in patient outcome either directly (w/ patient or family member) or indirectly (by helping other staff members).
- A clinical situation that stands out as the quintessence of nursing.
- A clinical situation:
 - That taught you something new
 - That provided new understandings and changed your practice
 - Where you clearly made a difference
 - That made you notice something new
 - That opened up new ways of helping or new lines of inquiry
- A clinical situation that was particularly demanding
- An incident that went unusually well
- An incident that was very ordinary and typical, yet memorable
- A situation in which there was a breakdown (things did not go well)

Exemplars may also:

- Recount instances of early warning signs that you recognize before they could be validated by objective data
- Demonstrate new clinical knowledge gained through working with a new procedure, new illness, or new technology
- Recount examples of healing relationships
- Include examples of expert coaching of a patient in a difficult situation or of colleagues in a clinical situation

Exemplars are NOT Case Studies

Exemplars ARE:

- A written account as a narrative or story that reflects current practice*.
- Written in everyday language, not with a theoretical (e.g., nursing diagnosis) approach.
- Focused on clinical work – aspects or domains of practice:
 - Clinical judgment, wisdom, thinking & reasoning
 - Therapeutic relationships; caring practice
 - Grasp of a situation; ability to “see” a problem
 - Actions in a situation; performance; sense of responsibility
 - Response to changing situations; anticipatory skills
 - Engagement with the patient/family; skill of involvement
 - Agency; advocacy; response to diversity
 - Collaboration; teamwork
 - Clinical inquiry; innovation

Exemplars include:

- A brief background or history of the patient
- A detailed description of what happened including as much dialogue as possible
- Why the situation is “critical” or significant to you
- What your concerns were at the time
- What you were thinking about as it was taking place
- What you were feeling during and after the situation
- What, if anything, you found most demanding about the situation
- What you found to be most satisfying about the situation

Developing Exemplars

- How to get started:
 - Reflect on your practice
 - List possible stories
 - Participate in group storytelling
 - Start writing without concern for grammar, spelling, wording, sentence structure – just start writing
- Before you start, consider whether the story represents your **current** practice.
- Write as much about the story on paper as is relevant, with as much detail as you remember.
- **Planning**
 - Exemplars take a little time to complete
 - Know the standards for portfolio submission and give yourself enough time to complete the required number of exemplars (1 or 2).
 - Your portfolio is a document that reflects an integrated perspective about your practice. It requires the participation of several other individuals. Thus, be sure to allow adequate time for all participants to have the opportunity to provide thoughtful and complete input.
 - Working with a coach takes time and should be viewed as a process rather than some level of evaluation (e.g., Do you think this will pass?)
 - Allow adequate time for dialogue about your story(ies) so that your exemplar(s) clearly reflect your level of performance with respect to the domain or aspects of practice that are prevailing, dominant, or featured.

Developing Exemplars

- Writing
 - Write the story down as you remember it, don’t worry about the details at first.
 - Or start telling the story out loud to someone (you can tape this and write it down by listening to the tape).

- Write down what you actually did.
- Use your imagination and relive the situation as you write – pause every now and then and reflect/think/remember the events as they evolved.
- Go back and add missed details.
- Use everyday clinical language.
- Include a very brief sentence about how you became involved with the patient.
- Give a first-person account.
- Include dialogue.
- Change the name(s) of patients, families, providers, etc.
- Describe the actual outcomes.

Developing Exemplars

- Avoid:
 - Generalizations
 - Philosophical statements
 - Summary statements
 - Naming the domain or aspect of practice
 - “Talking to the Committee”

Developing Exemplars

- Complete exemplars include:
 - A brief background or history of the patient
 - Why the situation is significant to you
 - What you found most demanding
 - What you found most satisfying
- When your exemplar is complete:
 - Correct for spelling
 - Correct the grammar
 - Do not muck with the works to “spiff up the language.”

Submitting Exemplars

- Typed, 12 font, double spaced
- No longer than 5 pages
- Exemplar must have a title