



Nursing Times

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Helping Others to Empower the Future!

EAL Support Program: Faculty Perspective

By Liza Choi
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Hi! My name is Liza Choi and it has been my privilege and honour to be the founder and faculty mentor for the EAL Nursing Support Program. It

is hard to believe that the program has been around for four years now. In fact, our very first members who were first year students are now graduating and I am happy to report our former EAL support program members are graduating and finding jobs. Some of these alumni are now returning to the program to volunteer on their own time. I am amazed at the sense of community we have all worked so hard to build and establish.

I have been asked to provide my insights on this program over the years. What has been the impact of this program? Is all this activity worth the effort? Instead of offering an academic treatise detailing all the nursing studies on the impact of support groups for EAL nursing students, I would like to share two anecdotes.

In my second year as a faculty mentor, I had the great fortune of assisting a nursing student with a Tibetan background. To anyone who met her, she exuded this sense of grace and centeredness. It was clear to me that she was perfectly capable of connecting with virtually anybody on a personal level. However, she was experiencing difficulties in learning the intricacies of Canadian culture and was unsure of how to interact with her nursing student colleagues. With the help of the program and her strength of character, she was able to overcome these difficulties. She even became a peer mentor for other EAL nursing students. It was thoroughly enjoyable to act as a cultural ambassador to help her bridge this gap.

What I came to appreciate about this experience is that it was a wonderful example of the strength and vision of not only MRU but the country we call Canada. I came to realize that we were both so blessed to live in a country that allowed us to connect, share and grow together. This experience elevated both of us and allowed us to transcend our differences. I came away with a greater appreciation of our circumstances and for the country we both now call home.

This year after returning from a year living abroad in Hong Kong, a young woman from Afghanistan joined the support program. Whereas many students come to me needing help to gain a greater understanding of Canadian culture, this student was experiencing difficulties accepting herself as a Muslim living in a secular country like Canada. She had limited interaction with fellow students as she was so unsure on how to conduct herself when with student colleagues. Interestingly, there was never an issue with her ability to communicate in English. Our interaction turned out to be an exploration of self-acceptance. This experience demonstrated to me that EAL nursing students



come to the program with a wide variety of needs and issues. Recognizing these needs is central to the success of this program.

I share these stories to offer a different perspective on this support program. I am beginning to appreciate that the rewards and lessons learned in the EAL support program are as varied as our clientele. Each member of the support program brings their own richness and uniqueness. It is from diversity that we derive our strength and resiliency.

Looking forward to a great year.

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Contact Us

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Editorial

By Charmaine Law
RN, BN, Alumni, MRU School of Nursing

Time, where did it go? It seems like it was just last week that the semester started. Wouldn't you agree that it went by way too fast? Already, it is the start of November. For all those first years, those who started university this year, you have almost finished one whole semester; it wasn't too hard, was it? And to everybody else, it means you are one semester closer to achieving your goal of attaining your degree.

Talking about time, it is already coming close to winter, if you look outside it already looks and feels that way. The first snow has fallen and the vast change in temperature has already begun. It must have been the blessing of a warm winter last year that has made me forget how cold it can get around here. But personally, the cold weather makes al-

most perfect conditions to study. That is mainly because I don't want to go outside and encounter the cold weather. I am able to sit back in all my comfortable clothes with a big cup of something warm to drink. At least it is not sunny and warm, making you want to go out and play. That being said, the winter brings a variety of activities that you can only do with snow. What do you think? Do you tend to study better when it is snowing outside? Or are you the opposite of me, you study in the sunshine and warm weather?

Whichever way you study best, I wish you all the best of luck as we get over the hump of midterms and assignments before this semester ends.

Me + English + Volunteering

By Sandy Burk
MRU Student

Last year I started with the EAL support group and had no idea really what they do. I only knew I wanted to help out



because the nursing degree is so intense and I was sure there must be some added challenge if English is not your first language. I now

know that EAL is a support group with many functions and that peer mentoring (what I do) is only a small facet of what the group does and is for students. So, since at the time I didn't know exactly what it was, I started with the very tangible, I started to edit and work with students on their papers.

To my surprise when I saw some of these papers I realized that the pre-conceived notions of what types of things I would be helping with were totally wrong. I thought that I would need to spend a lot of time with individuals and that these papers I was helping with would need a full work up. I was so wrong... Volunteering as a mentor and doing this very literal and hands-on mentoring with the paper editing has taught me a lot of things about English, my own writing misgivings

and about the people I work with.

I have realized how hard English must be to learn because in doing some of the papers I have found that there are quite a few words that have similar roots but mean VERY different things. I am not going to lie, I do laugh out loud about some of the things that I read, but then there is a process afterward. I think about how best to explain this to the person. But ultimately when I come across some of these strange words or grammatical phenomena I also end up reflecting on how strange English is.

For me when I am doing these papers I realize how imperfect my own spelling and grammar are and the common mistakes I make. One of my other pre-



conceived notions about what these papers would look like is that they would have lots of grammar mistakes. Wrong again. Instead I actually have found that EAL students have a much better grasp of proper grammar than I do. So if I'm not sure on something when I am doing these papers I ask my English major boyfriend to help. I remember a lot of these lessons and I

end up amending mistakes in my own papers.

I also end up with a beautiful and unexpected result from working with my fellow classmates and someday colleagues, I learn about them. I learn about them from their writing styles but also what they are writing about. I feel privileged that I get to know them through this type of volunteer work. I like to sit down with them and show them why and how I have changed the paper and this gives me the added benefit of having a real connection. This is the real reason I like and support the EAL group: friends.



Transition Time

By Caithlyn Passion
RN, BN, Alumni, MRU School of Nursing

Just like the sudden change in season, our Fall term has shifted. What was once a warm, new semester has now been slowly blown away and buried beneath a cool, dusty layer of snow... meaning at this point, we are well settled into our studies and are preparing for what Winter has to offer. Here at the EAL we have been busy re-organizing ourselves and our program as we continually try to best fit our Nursing student's wants and needs. Along with a new EAL video project, the Peer Mentorship program has been re-launched and we are happy to see our Nursing students connect and advocate for one another. Just as we've begun adjusting to the challenges of the weather and of the semester so far, we recognize that alongside our students we are caught in the middle of something old, and something new, and we are determined to bridge ourselves across!

to think or act in a way that we have never done before; the 'change' and 'growth' part is what we might find as the end result. Reflecting on my own personal journey as Nursing student, Grad Nurse, and now RN for almost 2 years, I can see how I have been so attracted to the concept of 'transition' and the understanding of why this experience is so meaningful.

During that moment of realizing I had already felt those sentiments and been through nerve-racking times in the past, it somehow brought me great comfort. To know that I had been through difficulties, managed to survive and perhaps became wiser both personally and professionally because of it, re-inspired and re-motivated my willingness to keep going.



Most recently, I was faced with a situation that I once thought would only be possible in my most wildest Nursing nightmares: my manager asked to start orienting me to become Charge Nurse! It was

overwhelming to feel so much fear and self-doubt, thinking about the enormous amount of new responsibilities and expectations that were being placed upon me. As I sat at the desk my first few days, panic-stricken and heart pounding, what happened next was probably the oddest revelation I had ever had: in the midst of my mind's hysteria, I had somehow realized that I recognized these feelings and I had felt this way before! The first time I ever catheterized a patient; my first scholarly APA composition; the first time dealing with angry family members; the first ileostomy disaster--- these were all times I could distinctly remember being just as shaky, uncertain, and self-conscious.

For any other student or graduate going through a seemingly rough transition, although the awkward and terrorized feelings can not be helped, I'm hoping that you too can recognize that you are merely going through yet another new process, and ultimately have been given another opportunity to grow.



And so, just as naturally as the rich yellows and oranges of Fall submit to the calm, white stillness of Winter, we too must embrace our personal process and inevitable change. Whether you are settling in for a long cold winter, or gloriously dancing outside in the snow, we look forward to witnessing and encouraging each other's transitions as we continue sharing our experiences together as a Nursing community.



To best describe this phenomenon, one might say we are all undergoing some sort of 'transition'. Although 'change' and 'growth' are two words more commonly used, 'transition' is seemingly a better fit for defining those moments in time when we are faced with a situation that challenges us

Take A Peek

Take a peek at pictures we took during our gatherings and of our awesome map!



A Memorable Journey

By Yenzin Choedon
4th year MRU Nursing Student

I fell in love with Mount Royal University the first time I saw it. I got enrolled in nursing and I was so looking forward to it. I did not think English would even be a challenge for me because I always thought I was good at communication. As I started, I struggled with written assignments and exams. There would be words that I just could not seem to comprehend and whenever I faced difficulties, I always wondered why only me? Why did I take so long to finish a paper when my fellow classmates finished it in a day or two? English as an additional language was an issue for me that reflected on my academic performance and disappointed me a lot. The main issues for me were communication and assignments.



English as an additional language affected my communication not only with my peers but also when dealing with my patients. When I started my clinical rotations, I realized that I needed extra help to clarify my choice of words when communicating with my classmates, to gain a deeper understanding of Canadian humor and even to work on my strong accent. This is because I would think they wouldn't be able to understand me and laugh at me. I wanted to make everything right in one day so that the next day would be free of problems. I was so conscious of my accent

that my friends spoke on my behalf when going out for shopping.

Similarly, I had a hard time doing my assignments. Compared to the country where I came from the schooling is very different. Universities are supposed to be more lenient back home but here, in my opinion, it is much stricter. I always dreaded when I had to do assignments. It was the first time I heard about APA formatted scholarly papers and the fact that I had to write the entire paper in third person. I still remember getting the worst mark for my very first scholarly nursing paper. I had problems with grammar, choices of words and even writing in proper APA format.

And then EAL support group for nursing students came into the picture, I heard about it through an instructor and was very curious as to what it was and how it supported nursing students like me who speak English as an additional language. I approached Liza and I was ready to do whatever it took to make me become academically successful. EAL support group provided various workshops on topics such as time management, pronunciation, discussion on common communication challenges in clinical, study tips, and how to do assignments.



EAL support group also kept track of my progress and helped me identify my strengths. There were volunteers and peer mentors who would assist nursing students who were in need of assistance. There were so many workshops EAL offered and I tried my best to attend each class. The EAL support group was always there to provide help, create a sense of belonging and a supportive environment. This was such a great opportunity that provided free workshops that would not only help us academically but also develop our personality.

I have had four wonderful years at MRU and even though I struggled during these years, I have outgrown my challenges, learnt a lot of things and discovered new things about me. I would like to extend my thankfulness to EAL support group chair, Liza Choi, and all the instructors who have taken extra time to keep this support group going and enrich it with their wisdom. This support group helped me throughout my years as a nursing student and I am sure it will provide the same for you as well. Let's take responsibility for this legacy so that future generations of EAL nursing students benefit from the program.





Dear Nurse Know, I am starting to feel overwhelmed by the fact that the semester's almost through! We have just finished midterms, and already I feel like I need to prepare myself for finals. I wasn't exactly happy about my midterm results and I feel like I need help with studying better. Do you have any tips or strategies that worked for you in the past? Please help!

Yours, Nervous Nanci

Dearest Nervous Nanci, It is perfectly normal to feel nervous about exams that are coming ever so soon. I suggest listing all the sub-topics you need to study in each subject and creating a schedule. In a schedule you can plan out what you need to study each day and how much time you are going to spend on each topic. This way you are aware of what you need to study and it ensures you study everything before your exam. Don't forget to leave a few open spots before your exam to review things you may have forgotten or just need a reminder about it.



Dear Nurse Know, It is my first time in the community setting for my clinical and I am very nervous! I have only ever been in the hospital and I know this might seem strange, but I am not used to having clients who are not acutely ill... these people just seem so healthy! I feel as if I don't know how to create a proper plan of care for them because they are technically "not sick". What should I think or do so that my mental state changes to I know I can still be a good Nurse without being in a hospital!

Sincerely, Hospital Hellen

Dear Hospital Hellen, Community is a new and interesting aspect of nursing that needs a little getting used to. I would suggest trying to put your mindset in primary-intervention mode rather than secondary or tertiary intervention mode. The biggest thing in community nursing is to help people live with a current diagnosis or prevent a potential diagnosis. Think of the whole community as your population rather than a person in the community as your population. I hope that helps.

Truly, Nurse know.

A Look Into The Past

By Charmaine Law

RN, BN, Alumni, MRU School of Nursing

It seems like it was just yesterday when I first started nursing school. I remember the first day of clinical: the feeling of walking onto the unit where everything was so new and fresh to me. Will I never forget the fear I had and the sense of feeling of being in the way of others who were working. Despite these feelings, within a short period of four years, not only have I received my bachelor of Nursing, but I have grown so much in knowledge, nursing skills and myself as a whole.



One thing I came to realize is that the way I approach patients isn't the same, comparing myself now to when I first started nursing. The change was so gradual that I didn't even realise it had happened. Reflecting back again to my first clinical, I was always afraid of going into a patient's room and start conversations or even to wake them up for morning vitals. Even now after four years later, I don't exactly enjoy waking patients up from their sleep to do morning vitals, but I know it is needed and it gets easier. I have also gotten better at striking up a conversation with the patient, making both the patients and myself feel more at ease. I can't say I always have a topic that both the patient and I can connect with and chat about, but I have come to realise that what we talk about doesn't matter. What really matters is the relationship we build between us.

Previously I wrote about my worries as I started my last semester of school, finishing my final practicum. Just like words being scribbled away, those few months of my last semester seemed to have flown away as well.

Although I have finished the semester and previous worries have come and gone, new ones have arisen. Just like any nursing stu-

dent who finishes school, the next step is to complete and pass the CRNE. As we all know, as nursing students we all have to take the CRNE in order to become registered nurses under the Canadian Nurses Association to be able to work. I ask myself, "What should I study? What do I need to know?" Or should my question be "What do I not know?" It seriously is a scary thought, how almost my whole life career relies on one test, and one test alone. The closer the exam gets, the more I am worried. Although I am worried I need to take a step back and tell myself that I've been in school for four years and have been preparing for my future. There is nothing new that they can throw at me.

I seem to be a person who worries about the future a lot, so as I graduate, the next thing on my list of worries includes finding a job.

Although people are always looking for jobs, or so it seems, the process of getting one is the scary part. I remember my preceptor telling me that I should find something I enjoy doing, but now that leads me to the question "What do I enjoy?" Instead of having one definite answer to this question, my conclusion is that I will start somewhere and if I don't like it I'll move on and I will have learned from my experience. The one good thing I learned about nursing is that it gives such variety and opportunity.



As I continue on my journey into the nursing work-world. I will not forget how I got there or the first feelings I had. Not only do I believe that it will help me when I work with future students but it will allow me to build relationships with them in a better way. Events that cause worry won't stop happening but I know that I will continue to move on and the only thing I can do is to face them head on, for when I look back I have come so far already and I know I can't stop.

EAL Nursing



This program is available to all nursing students. If you are proactively looking for improvement in the areas of:

- Communication
- Writing strategy
- Preparing for nursing clinical
- Gaining support

If this interests you, please contact:

Liza Choi
lchoi@mtroyal.ca or 403-440-6926
Lesley Morgan
lmorgan@mtroyal.ca or 403-440-8404

All nursing students:

Looking to learn about other cultures?
Want to help your fellow students?
Would you like to Volunteer?

Become a Peer Mentor!

If this interests you, please contact:

Liza Choi
lchoi@mtroyal.ca or 403-440-6926
Lesley Morgan
lmorgan@mtroyal.ca or 403-440-8404



Upcoming events!

Topic: Communication in clinical
Date: Friday, November 16th, 2012
Time: 1200–1300
Location Y267
Potluck style

Topic: Exam preparation and seasonal celebration
Date: Friday, December 7th, 2012
Time: 1200–1300
Location Y267
Potluck style

Please RSVP to Liza Choi at lchoi@mtroyal.ca or Lesley Morgan at lmorgan@mtroyal.ca
If the large group setting/timings are not to your liking. You have the option of meeting with Liza individually.



Thank you to our writers who took the time to contribute their insights and thoughts. A special thanks to Lesley Morgan and Charmaine Law for their endless editing.

-Liza