



# **Student nurses' attitudes to social justice and poverty: an international evaluation**

*Research into the effect of pedagogical strategies for raising nurses' awareness of poverty and social justice, by assessing and comparing attitudes of Scottish and American student nurses before and after different teaching methods focusing on health inequalities*

## Colophon

Title: Student nurses' attitudes to social justice and poverty: an international evaluation

Key words: Attitudes, Health inequity, Nurse education, Social inequality, Social justice, Poverty

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July – 2018

Course code: AM\_471121

This internship report was established in cooperation with the Athena Science Shop.

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## Abstract

Given the link between poverty and health, nurses deal with health consequences of social inequity across the United Kingdom (U.K.) and United States (U.S.) every day. In both countries, nurses are placed in the position which enables them to impact population health. However, little is known about the attitude of student nurses to social justice and poverty and about the impact of current pedagogical strategies teaching about health inequalities.

The aim of the study was to assess and compare the attitude of Scottish and American nursing students to social justice and poverty before and after teaching about health inequalities. An online survey was used exploring student nurses' attitudes before (n=230) and after (n=57) teaching population health. Descriptive statistics were used to present student nurses' attitudes. Additional statistical analysis was performed to identify a possible change in attitudes, identify differences between U.K. and U.S. cohorts and to gain insight into factors that might explain these differences.

Examination of attitudes to poverty and social justice showed that on an average student nurses disagreed with stigmatizing statements and mostly agreed with statements promoting social justice. Moreover, statistically significant differences in attitudes for both social justice ( $P=0.002$ ) and poverty scale ( $P<0.001$ ) were found between U.K. and U.S. cohorts. In multivariate analysis, engagement in social justice promoting activities, activism and education were associated with positive attitudes to social justice and poverty. Findings suggest that the course on health inequalities at Oregon Health & Science University (U.S.) has a significant positive influence on attitudes to poverty and perceived behavioral control ( $P=0.01$ ).

Findings of this international study could have important implications for undergraduate nursing education. Insight into student nurses' attitudes to social justice and poverty may assist in empowering student nurses to seek better solutions that will improve the situation of health equity in the future.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, Health inequity, Nurse education, Social inequality, Social justice, Student nurses, Poverty.