EIAG Reflection

Mallory Dudley

Western Washington University

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The experience that has really stuck with me throughout the quarter was when I went on my first ride along with the Community Paramedic. His job is to find people out in the community who frequently call 911 and advocate for them to find a social service for their needs. My first ride with him included three home visits with his patients. Although each visit with each patient was very different in terms of their needs, each experience made me very aware of my own presence and how I contribute to their own personal experience of receiving help.

The very first patient we went to see was at their home. The patient suffered from obesity and could not get out of bed. The community paramedic visited this patient to see if he could find a service to have a possible home care nurse to control their oxygen and make sure that the patient was getting their needs met. The community paramedic had warned me of the patient’s mental health status and comfort level of being around new people. He informed me that the patient does not like attention. The moment I walked in, I knew I made the patient uncomfortable by being there so I mentioned I was just there to assist the Community Paramedic. The patient asked the Community Paramedic who I was and then remained fairly quiet throughout the visit.

This experience really made me think about how others perceive me and how that might impact their experience. For this particular situation, it made me wonder how someone in a paramedic uniform might come across as more knowledgeable and create an unbalanced power dynamic between the client and the paramedic when working with vulnerable populations. It is important that whom you are working with is comfortable and able to share their concerns in a safe space. With this experience, as an intern with no medical experience or ability to really interact with the client, I realized how important it is establish a good relationship with them from the beginning to develop trust and productivity. When I work with clients in the future, it will be very important for me to develop that safe space and develop a level of trust with whom I am working with. Populations that are in vulnerable places are more likely to notice that power dynamic and might not be willing to work willingly as a level of trust has to be developed.

With this first home visit, I personally felt uncomfortable because I knew I was a stranger to this patient. I was very unsure of what to do or say, or even where to look considering I was mostly observing. I became worried that I did not know what my role was as an observer and did not know how to play the part. Throughout the visit I introduced myself and then became quiet as I intently listened to the Community Paramedic as he helped the patient with any medical concerns and tried to set them up with a case manager. I was unsure of how to respond to the situation. At this point I was disappointed in my own personal abilities. According to the text, *The Successful Internship* it discusses your ability to expand and grow, “In the area of Personal Development, you may have discovered a response pattern that you want to work on changing.” (Sweitzer, 2014). This situation made me realize personally and professionally that I do not know how to jump into situations and take control. Given the previous knowledge of the patient’s mental health status, I also worried that my presence interfered with the patient’s ability to express any concerns. This experience was very humbling as to see how some live daily and for this patient, getting out of bed was a difficult task. People who are in very vulnerable positions also tend to live under the radar, and it is amazing how easily forgotten they are in our busy society.

This experience will help me grow as I meet more clients, learn their needs, and learn how to best cater to their needs. At this point I still think of myself as an observer and a learner, however the more practice I can put in now, the more confident I will be in my abilities to work with other people. Although every person and situation is entirely different, I can learn from these experiences to learn how to focus all of my attention on the client.

References

Sweitzer, Frederick H., King, Mary A. (2014). Moving ahead: the exploration stage. *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional, and Civic Development in Experiential Learning.* Belmont, California: Brooks/Cole.

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