

Fostering Holistic Health & Equity: Integrating Wellbeing, Emotional Intelligence, and Resilience into Nursing Curriculum

Tracy Hicks DNP, MBA, APRN, FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC, CARN-AP, FIAAN, FAANP
AACN Diversity Leadership Institute



BACKGROUND

Post-Pandemic Landscape and Healthcare Disparities

We are now living in a post-pandemic world. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed significant disparities in healthcare, leading to widespread protests against racial injustice and intensified efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Nurses have played a pivotal role in responding to this crisis, recognizing and addressing racism as a public health issue.

Challenges for Academic Nurses

Academic nurses face distinct challenges, particularly with legislative mandates on DEI. They are responsible for ensuring that nursing curricula address DEI and person-centered care. The AACN Essentials outline ten domains reflecting professional nursing competencies applicable across four spheres of care:

- Wellness and Disease Prevention
- Chronic Disease Care
- Regenerative or Restorative Care
- Hospice/Palliative Care

Competency-based education requires students to master critical competencies for their area of study. These competencies include communication, compassionate care, DEI, evidence-based practice, ethics, health policy, and social determinants of health, which are all integral to promoting health equity.

Importance of Emotional Intelligence and Resilience

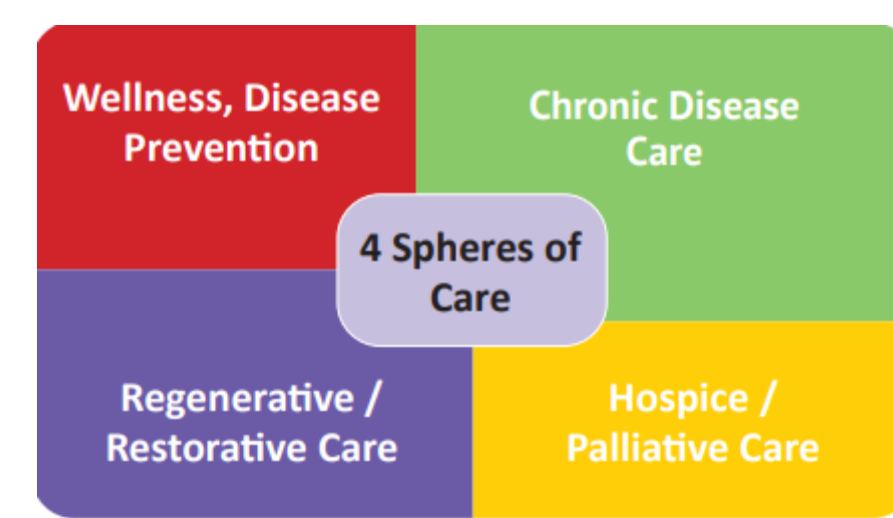
Effective communication, compassionate care, and understanding social determinants of health are essential for navigating public health and policy. These competencies require individual well-being, emotional intelligence, and resilience. Despite DEI legislative mandates, nursing faculty and students must be prepared to care for a diverse population while also addressing the implications on their mental health.

Prioritizing Mental Health in Nursing Education

Nurses have implemented changes in their practices and fostered teamwork to provide safer care. It is crucial to prioritize policies that support the mental health of nursing students and faculty, both nationally and globally, to manage the uncertainty surrounding DEI mandates.

Integrating Well-Being in Nursing Curriculum

Incorporating well-being, emotional intelligence, and resilience into the nursing curriculum is essential for preparing students to provide inclusive, high-quality, and person-centered care. These components help nurses manage their own health, understand and respond to the emotional needs of others, and thrive professionally despite challenges and barriers. By fostering these qualities, nursing education can create a more supportive, empathetic, and inclusive healthcare environment. Teaching these components ensures that the work continues despite obstacles. (AACN, 2021)



REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- "Making nursing education equitable and inclusive requires actively combating structural racism, discrimination, systemic inequity, exclusion, and bias." (AACN, 2021)
- Emotional Intelligent nurse leaders are prepared to navigate chronic challenges of nursing practice. (Abraham & Scaria, 2017)
- Race-related stress has been extensively researched in Sociology and Psychology, but less so in Nursing. The stress caused by racial bias is specifically racism-related, not just race-related. This type of stress can impact nurses' engagement, performance, and practice. To maintain their health and well-being, psychological resilience is crucial for nurses. Therefore, healthcare organizations need to acknowledge racism-related stress and support resilience among nurses. (Byers et al, 2021)
- The COVID-19 pandemic has posed an unprecedented global health challenge, potentially leading to a "second pandemic" of mental health crises in health systems and communities. A comprehensive public health response must include addressing the psychological impact of hospitalization on patients, families, and staff, planning for emergency and acute psychiatric care if hospitals are overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients. Innovating ways to provide mental health care in communities while managing strained health system resources. Nurses and nurse leaders should anticipate these mental health challenges, help prepare health systems and communities, and advocate for a coordinated response to promote mental wellness and resilience. (Choi et al, 2020)
- The COVID-19 pandemic's economic, psychological, and physical effects were complex, with conflicting emotions further strained by global political and social issues. Emotional intelligence (EI), the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions and those of others, is crucial in navigating these stressors. During the pandemic, one in five healthcare workers quit due to insufficient pay, long hours, and burnout. (Chung et al, 2023)
- When patients or employees feel unheard or disrespected, it undermines their trust in the healthcare system and workplace, leading to poor communication, negative health outcomes, and deteriorating work culture. (Doucette, 2023)
- The growing nursing shortage and high turnover rates highlight the need for research on the emotional intelligence (EI) of nursing leaders. Future studies should explore the impact of EI educational programs for nursing leaders, aiming to create a more positive work environment. Understanding EI affects nursing job satisfaction will help establish programs that support and develop nursing leaders. (Feather, 2009)
- Systemic racism, violence, and oppression of minorities reached an intolerable level, underscored by the tragic deaths of individuals such as George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. This has highlighted the responsibility to act against injustice. Nurses, consistently rated highest in honesty and ethics, have a duty to provide quality care and advocate for the rights, health, and safety of all patients. The Code of Ethics for Nurses emphasizes this responsibility, urging nurses to respect all individuals, ensure equitable care, and promote social justice. Care delivery models must address inequities, including mitigating the digital divide and ensuring access to necessary resources and services. (Jesse, 2020)
- Since late 2019, the world has faced the dual challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and a heightened awareness of racial injustices, particularly following the summer of 2020. Organizations have renewed their focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Emotional intelligence (EI) as a crucial tool for advancement within organizations, particularly for Black women and DEI practitioners. It is argued that achieving equity and inclusion requires EI as a foundational element. Supporting DEI practitioners can foster a harmonious work environment and lead to personal, community, and organizational success. (Jimenez & Moore, 2023)
- Integrative medicine has emerged as a potential solution to the American healthcare crisis. It offers patient-centered, healing-oriented care that emphasizes the therapeutic relationship and incorporates both conventional and alternative medicine approaches. Initially driven by consumer demand, integrative medicine's focus on understanding whole persons and promoting lifestyle changes is now seen as a strategy to combat the chronic diseases straining the economy. (Maizes et al, 2009)
- Healthcare disparities persist due to a lack of diversity and representativeness in research, resulting in nongeneralizable evidence and suboptimal individual outcomes. To improve diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in research, teams can adopt several strategies throughout the research process. These include intentional DEI-based goal-setting, forming diverse research and leadership teams, engaging with communities to set study goals, talking outreach interventions, desentralizing study procedures, incorporating innovative technology for flexible data collection, and practicing self-surveillance to prevent biases. Regulatory authorities can also positively influence DEI in clinical research efforts. Nurses can assist and promote diverse patient involvement in clinical research. (Washington et al, 2023)
- It is difficult to achieve health equity without addressing and significantly reducing disparities (Webb Hooper & Perez-Stable, 2023)

REFERENCES

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2021). The Essentials: Core competencies for professional nursing education. Accessible online at <https://www.aacnursing.org/Portals/0/PDFs/Publications/Essentials-2021.pdf>

Abraham, J., & Scaria, J. (2017). Emotional intelligence: The context for successful nursing leadership: a literature review. *Nurse Care Open Acces J*, 2(6), 160-164.

Byers, O. M., Fitzpatrick, J. J., McDonald, P. E., & Nelson, G. C. (2021). Giving while grieving: Racism-related stress and psychological resilience in Black/African American registered nurses. *Nursing outlook*, 69(6), 1039-1048.

Choi, K. R., Heilemann, M. V., Fauer, A., & Mead, M. (2020). A second pandemic: mental health spillover from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). *Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association*, 26(4), 340-343.

Chung, S. R., Cichocki, M. N., & Chung, K. C. (2023). Building emotional intelligence. *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, 151(1), 1-5.

Doucette, J. N. (2023). Exploring the Human Experience in Health Care. *AJN The American Journal of Nursing*, 123(9), 38-42.

Feather, R. (2009). Emotional intelligence in relation to nursing leadership: does it matter?. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 17(3), 376-382.

Jiménez, A. E., & Moore, C. V. (2023). Black Women, Emotional Intelligence, and Organizational Opportunities for Growth. In *The Experiences of Black Women Diversity Practitioners in Historically White Institutions* (pp. 145-166). IGI Global.

Jesse, A. T. (2020). Championing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Social Justice. *AAACN Viewpoint*, 42(6), 2-12.

Maizes, V., Rakei, D., & Niemic, C. (2009). Integrative medicine and patient-centered care. *Explore*, 5(5), 277-289.

Washington, V., Franklin, J. B., Huang, E. S., Mega, J. L., & Abernethy, A. P. (2023). Diversity, equity, and inclusion in clinical research: a path toward precision health for everyone. *Clinical Pharmacology & Therapeutics*, 113(3), 575-584.

Webb Hooper, M., & Pérez-Stable, E. J. (2023). Health equity is not possible without addressing disparities. *Health Psychology*, 42(9), 625.



STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

OUTCOME 1

Students will identify concepts associated with wellbeing, emotional intelligence, and resilience. In addition, students will be introduced to wellbeing and its success in educational programs by their Wellbeing Champions during the first semester.

OUTCOME 2

Students will create a stress management growth plan as part of the Emotional Intelligence pathway program. By taking an EQI assessment and participating in stress management activities, students will learn how to analyze their skills in stress management and improve them.

OUTCOME 3

Students will develop capacities for resilience to support their success in school and future professions. Using the HSC wellbeing model as a guide, students will reflect and participate in activities that promote resilience.

HSC WELLBEING MODEL

KNOWING YOURSELF

Students will discuss their values, recognize their strengths, formulate strategies to explore aspects of themselves, and evaluate their place in society and the world.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Students will assess their understanding of their own and others' emotions to improve interpersonal relationships, awareness of culture, and formulate strategies to interact with others and network.

COMMUNITY BELONGING

Students will discuss the value of belonging to communities, identify activities to serve their professional community, and identify their role in helping their community.

NAVIGATING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Students will implement activities to improve their physical, emotional, spiritual, and financial well-being.

METHODS

	Year 1	Year 1	Year 1	Year 1	Year 2	Year 2	Year 2	Year 2	Year 2
	Fall	Spring	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Spring	Summer	Summer
	Expanding Emotional Vocabulary			Building Emotional Flexibility		Self-Awareness and Emotional Accuracy			Social Awareness and Shared Understanding
College of Nursing	Assess#1 Debrief	In-Class Activity	On-Line Activity	Assess#2 Debrief	On-Line Activity	On-Line Activity Assess#3 Debrief	On-Line Activity	On-Line Activity	On-Line Activity Assess#4 Debrief

- Appointment by College of Nursing Associate Dean: EI Champion
- Meet with UNTHSC BelWell Department
- Curriculum Committee Approval
- Activity mapping to AACN Essentials
- Implementation Fall 2024 first Undergraduate and Graduate Cohort
- Pre/Post Survey

AACN ESSENTIALS

Primary focus on Domain 1, 2, 3, 9, 10

Domain 1: Knowledge for Nursing Practice Descriptor: Integration, translation, and application of established and evolving disciplinary nursing knowledge and ways of knowing, as well as knowledge from other disciplines, including a foundation in liberal arts and natural and social sciences. This distinguishes the practice of professional nursing and forms the basis for clinical judgment and innovation in nursing practice.

Progression Indicators:

Students

- I can apply the concepts of well-being, emotional intelligence (EI), and resilience to patient outcomes that address social determinants of health.
- I can effectively collaborate with the healthcare team utilizing the concepts of Well-being, EI, and Resilience.
- I can develop innovative treatment plans and protocols that improve patient outcomes.

Domain 2: Person-Centered Care Descriptor: Person-centered care focuses on the individual within multiple complicated contexts, including family and/or important others. Person-centered care is holistic, individualized, just, respectful, compassionate, coordinated, evidence-based, and developmentally appropriate.

Person-centered care builds on a scientific body of knowledge that guides nursing practice regardless of specialty or functional area.

Progression Indicators for Students:

- I can apply the concepts of well-being, emotional intelligence (EI), and resilience in crucial conversations and partnerships with the patient, family, and important others.
- I can effectively collaborate with the healthcare team utilizing the concepts of Well-being, EI, and Resilience to cultivate person-centered care.
- I can apply the concepts of well-being, emotional intelligence (EI), and resilience to provide holistic, just, respectful, compassionate, coordinated, evidenced-based, and developmentally appropriate treatment

Domain 3: Population Health Descriptor: Population health spans the healthcare delivery continuum from public health prevention to disease management of populations and describes collaborative activities with both traditional and non-traditional partnerships from affected communities, public health, industry, academia, health care, local government entities, and others for the improvement of equitable population health outcomes.

Progression Indicators for Students:

- I can apply the concepts of well-being, emotional intelligence (EI), and resilience to cultivate non-traditional partnerships that support disease management.
- I can effectively collaborate with the healthcare team utilizing the concepts of Well-being, EI, and Resilience to develop traditional and non-traditional partnerships for the improvement of equitable health outcomes.

Domain 4: Scholarship for Nursing Practice Descriptor: The generation, synthesis, translation, application, and dissemination of nursing knowledge to improve health and transform health care.

Domain 5: Quality and Safety Descriptor: Employment of established and emerging principles of safety and improvement science. Quality and safety, as core values of nursing practice, enhance quality and minimize risk of harm to patients and providers through both system effectiveness and individual performance.

Domain 6: Interprofessional Partnerships Descriptor: Intentional collaboration across professions and with care team members, patients, families, communities, and other stakeholders to optimize care, enhance the healthcare experience, and strengthen outcomes.

Domain 7: Systems-Based Practice Descriptor: Responding to and leading within complex systems of health care. Nurses effectively and proactively coordinate resources to provide safe, quality, equitable care to diverse populations.

Domain 8: Information and Healthcare Technologies Descriptor: Information and communication technologies and informatics processes are used to provide care, gather data, form information to drive decision making, and support professionals as they expand knowledge and wisdom for practice. Informatics processes and technologies are used to manage and improve the delivery of safe, high-quality, and efficient healthcare services in accordance with best practice and professional and regulatory standards.

Domain 9: Professionalism Descriptor: Formation and cultivation of a sustainable professional nursing identity, accountability, perspective, collaborative disposition, and comportment that reflects nursing's characteristics and values.

Progression Indicators for Students:

- I can implement individualized treatment plans that focus on DEI considering wellness, EI, and resilience concepts.
- I can reflect on clinical care and professional situations that required focus on the concepts of wellness, EI, and resilience.
- I can implement treatment plans that cultivate civility in diverse settings.

Domain 10: Personal, Professional, and Leadership Development Descriptor: Participation in activities and self-reflection that foster personal health, resilience, and well-being, lifelong learning, and support the acquisition of nursing expertise and assertion of leadership

Progression Indicators for Students:

- I can implement and document activities that contribute to an environment that promotes self-care, personal health, and well-being.
- I can evaluate the clinic environment to determine the level of health and well-being.
- I can advocate for the promotion of social justice and eradication of structural racism and systematic inequity in nursing and society. (AACN, 2021)

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge Texas Christian University Chief Inclusion Officer and the College of Nursing, for supporting my application to the AACN Diversity Leadership Institute.

I acknowledge UNTHSC College of Nursing and the BelWell program for giving me a platform, providing resources, and supporting my work.

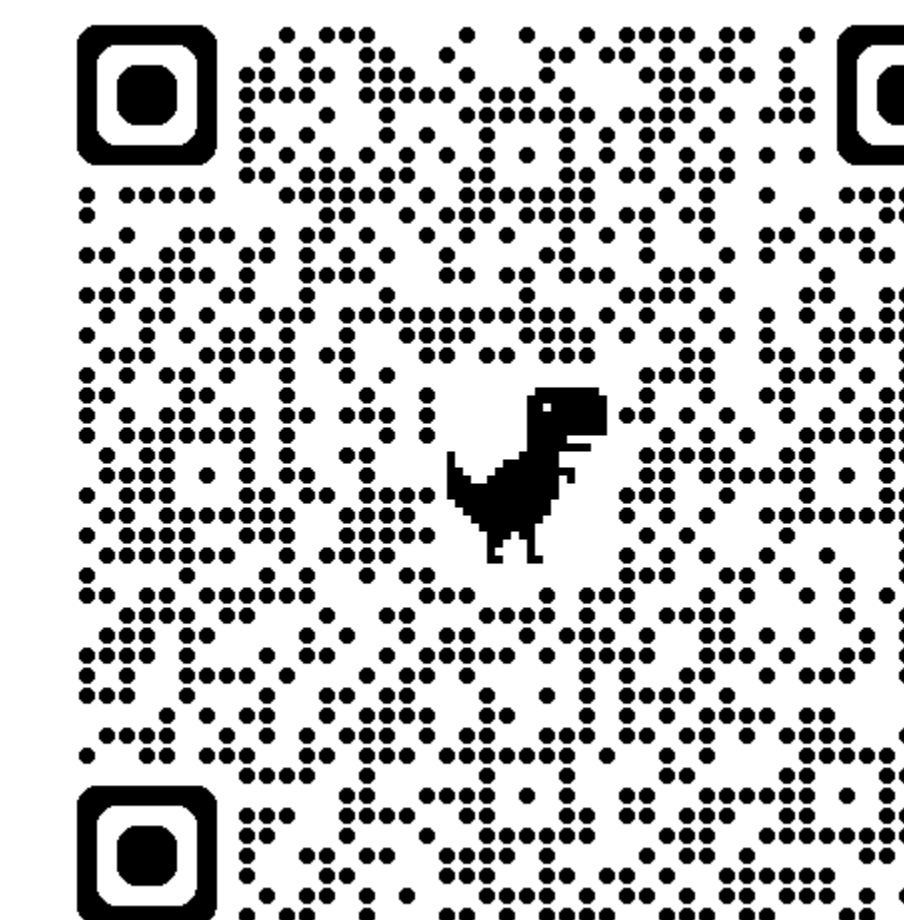
I acknowledge the patients/people I serve as they inspire me to promote systemic change.

I acknowledge Texas Nurse Practitioners for providing a platform for this work.

I acknowledge my team at C-Trilogy Outreach for working to support Project Holistic Health, and Equity ensuring that the practice implements the nursing model of holistic care.

I acknowledge GOD for giving me a purpose and the strength to serve.

I acknowledge my family for the support, encouragement.





Fostering Holistic Health & Equity: Integrating Well-being, Emotional Intelligence (EI/EQ), and Resilience into Nursing Curriculum

Tracy Hicks, DNP, MBA, APRN, FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC, CARN-AP, FIAAN, FAANP

Biography

Dr. Tracy Hicks is a dual certified APRN in Family Practice and Psychiatric Mental Health. She received her BSN from the University of Texas at Tyler in 2010, Master's and Post Master's degrees from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2013 and 2015, and Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from Frontier Nursing University in 2017, MBA in 2023 from Texas Christian University.

She holds a certification in addictions through the Addictions Nursing Certification Board, Diversity & Inclusion through Cornell University, and licensed Diversity & Inclusion Trainer through Empowered Living.

She is a Fellow of the International Academy of Addictions Nurses and the American Association of Nurse Practitioners.

She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau Nursing Honor Society of Nursing as well as local, state, and national NP organizations. She serves on committees for the American Academy of HIV Medicine (AAHIVM), Texas Nurse Practitioners, and the International Nursing Society on Addictions.

She serves on the Board of Directors for Texas Nurse Practitioners and the AAHIVM as well as Co-Chair for the Texas Steering Committee and appointed to the Texas Health and Human Services Behavioral Advisory Committee.

She has served as a content expert for Barkley Associates, American Nurses Association, and on a review panel for the Center for Disease Control (CDC) mental health division for HIV/AIDS.

She is the owner of C-Trilogy Comprehensive Clinical Care serving mental health, addiction, and primary care health needs established in 2015 and established a non-profit C-Trilogy Outreach in 2020 during the pandemic and has since received grant funding from SAMHSA for planning, development, and implementation of a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic.

She has provided mental health services to county jail system and other underserved populations.

She served as the inaugural Program Coordinator in BSN-DNP Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program and Diversity Champion Faculty Fellow for the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and co-chair of the University DEI committee at Texas Christian University (TCU) where she promoted education on addiction and care of those living with HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C. She is now the inaugural PMHNP Track Coordinator for the University of North Texas Health Science Center.

Her goal is to improve care in marginalized and disparate populations.

Contact Information



Tracy Hicks, DNP, MBA, APRN, FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC, CARN-AP, FIAAN, FAANP
Associate Professor, Clinic Owner, and Non-Profit Founder
University of North Texas Health Science Center College of Nursing
tracy.hicks@unthsc.edu