

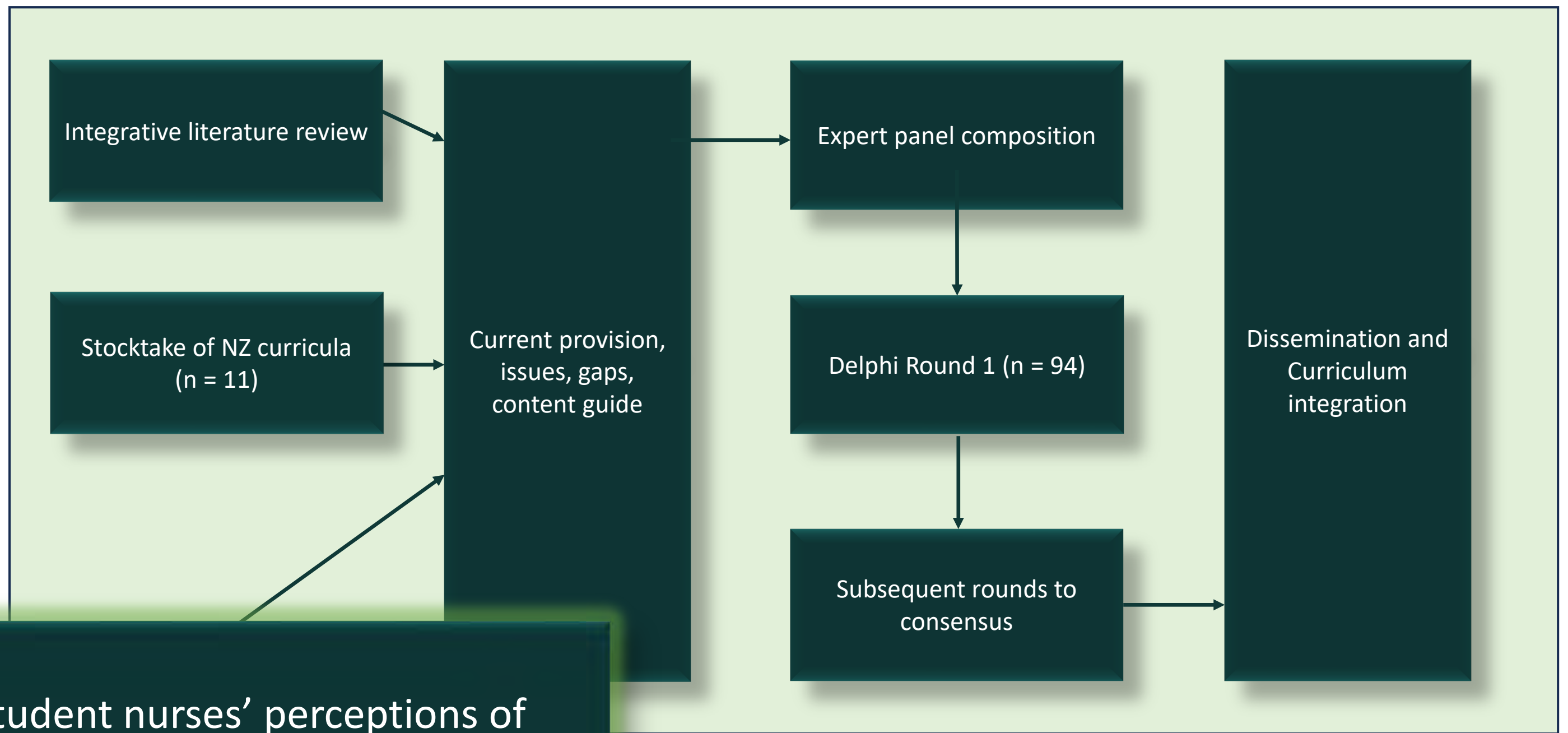
Future nursing workforce: Is it time for planned anti-ageism education as part of preparation for practice?

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The study reported on in this poster is part of larger work programme to re-imagine preparation of the future nursing workforce.

The 'Better Later Life (2019-2034)'¹ strategy sets out key action areas for addressing a response to New Zealand's ageing population. It recognises the importance of promoting healthy ageing and improving access to services as fundamental to achieving 'Better Later Life'. A key factor underpinning this action is the involvement of healthcare professionals. Nurses are uniquely situated at the forefront of healthcare to support physical and mental health and to positively impact quality of life through service coordination. Yet, as research has shown, discriminatory attitudes are prevalent²⁻³. When translated into service delivery, such attitudes can be barriers to the effective organisation of care packages, contributing to the overall cost of healthcare^{4,5}.

There is a substantial role for nurse educators to play in the development of the future nursing workforce where negative perceptions and discriminatory attitudes exist⁶. This study investigated the perceptions held by student nurses in New Zealand's polyethnic sector.



Above: Workflow of larger study with pop-out indicating position of 'Student nurses' perceptions of working aged care survey'.

Objectives	Method	Analysis
<p>The research objectives were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To determine student nurses' perceptions of working with older adults To understand student nurses' intentions to work in aged care following completion of nursing programmes offered at New Zealand polytechnics To identify how student nurses might be encouraged to consider aged care as a career choice 	<p>The study replicated research conducted at The University of Queensland⁷ to understand the local context of undergraduate nurses' perceptions of working with older people. The Students' Perceptions of Working with Older People (SPWOP)⁸ questionnaire was used to determine the perceptions of a convenience sample of student nurses who completed an online survey between February and June 2022. Three additional free text questions were added to enquire about students' intentions to work in aged care and the facilitators and barriers to doing so.</p>	<p>757 responses were received, and after cleaning 753 were usable. Excel and SPSS were used to analyse the closed questions. General thematic analysis was used to analyse the free text responses using NVIVO 12.⁹</p>

Findings	
	The mean SPWOP score was 48.78 (SD = 4.73, range = 34-64) indicating a slightly positive perception of working with older adults. There was no significant difference between those who had or had not worked with older adults before their programme. Third year students had a poorer perception of older adults than students in year 1 ($p = 0.002$)
	Clinical placements emphasised high-dependency and frailty to students. Placements in aged residential care were a deterrent to nurses wanting to choose a career with older adults because of organisational culture, remuneration and working conditions and the emotional burden of the work.
	<p>Evidence of ageism was found in free text responses:</p> <p>'They are unpredictable and sometimes racists, most older people do not like change either.' Participant 502</p> <p>'Majority of the patients are really sweet and grateful for care provided.' Participant 676</p> <p>'If you are a younger nurse perhaps I'd start to miss that younger interaction.' Participant 192</p> <p>'Having the close relationships with them is very important. Cause they tend to leave a very lonely life.' Participant 127</p> <p>'They are cute and lovely. Sometimes they can be rude but that will make you grow. Also, their behaviour has nothing to do with you personally. We do not know what they are actually feeling so we have to adjust.' Participant 17</p> <p>Nursing older people is a rewarding experience, however there does seem to be a stigma that once you work at a rest home it is hard to further your career.' Participant 276</p> <p>'Caring to older people is somewhat same like caring kids. So nurses needs patience and good skill and advance knowledge, older people may have different types of disease conditions.' Participant 234</p>

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Conclusions

- Strategies to positively promote the scope and variety of health needs of older adults are a necessary curriculum inclusion. Clinical placements should address learning objectives related to the health needs of older people rather than showcasing the frailest, most dependent members of society as a proxy for nursing care required
- Ageism was a feature of the free text responses indicating that students bring embedded attitudes to their practice. It is indeed time to implement anti-ageism education into the preparation of student nurses together with other measures that increase empathy to ensure that older adults do not face increased/increasing intersectionality accessing healthcare