

Obstacles to Clinical Education from the Viewpoint of Nursing Students of Yasuj University of Medical Sciences

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Abstract: Clinical education takes up half of the time nursing students spend over the academic courses of study. In fact, clinical education can be considered a series of activities to facilitate learning in a clinical environment, purpose of which is to create measurable changes in students as to enable them to carry out clinical care. Selected in the present descriptive research were 108 nursing students who had passed at least an internship semester. The survey sheet designed here contains questions regarding personal information and the current obstacles to learning clinical skills in four aspects: trainer, environment, educational program, and student. After having the questionnaires filled out, data were collected in order to be analyzed by the statistical software SPSS 17. As viewed by this group of students, the most important obstacles to clinical learning were unclarified educational goals (85.9%), failure of the students to maintain hospital disciplines (62.1%), unsuitability of working hours (66.6%), poor communication between students and nursing staff (77.8%), presence of visitors at hospital during the educational practices (61.2%) undetermined duties and obligations of interns (50%), lack of practical test to take at work (52.8%), unsuitability of the hours assigned for clinical education (50%), unfamiliarity of students to the laws and regulations in clinical education (48.1%). There are significant obstacles felt in the four aspects of clinical education, all of which could influence the practical skills of nursing students. Therefore, it seems necessary for educational authorities and trainers to pay more attention to the issue and take useful actions in order to create a desirable clinical learning environment.

[Masood Moghimi, Khierollah Nooryan, Zohera Karimi, Sima Mohammad Hossini, Mohsen Salari, Ardashir Afrasiabifar, Mohammadali Moghimi, Hasan Abidi, Ebrahim Momeni, Mohammad reza Rabani, Mahintaj Gohargani. **Obstacles to Clinical Education from the Viewpoint of Nursing Students of Yasuj University of Medical Sciences.** *Life Sci J* 2012;9(4):5222-5225] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com> 776

Keywords: clinical education, nursing students, learning obstacle

1. Introduction

The purpose of clinical education is to cause critical and creative thinking, self-directed learning, improve mental-physical skills, time management ability and boosting self-confidence, building appropriate relationships, and prevent them from being passive (1). Clinical education is a dynamic process through which students gradually become experienced by attending patients in hospital bedrooms, and eventually put what they have acquired into practice by interaction with trainers and environment(2). Certainly, the major stage of training nursing students takes place in actual clinical environments (3). Having theoretical knowledge alone is not enough for nursing

care, but applying clinical skills along with the gained knowledge is essential. Furthermore, Clinical education makes up one of the fundamental components of nursing academic curriculum (4), and has been recognized as the heart of nursing education and also as the evolving phase of professional maturity (5). Mastering the basic skills of nursing and becoming an “expert” in the medical community depends on the quality of education in a clinical environment (6). Hence, clinical internship courses play a crucial role in forming the professional personality of students. In fact, clinical education builds the foundation of academic curriculum in nursing studies; that is, the more productive the clinical education becomes, the

faster the field of nursing advances (7). Two points should be regarded as highly important; the remarkable effect of clinical education on developing the basic skills and professional abilities of nursing and midwifery students, and the initial step taken toward improving the quality of this course of study which would lead to identifying the problems and barriers to clinical education as viewed by students themselves, who are going through the process of training (8). Accordingly, the present research has been conducted to find out the obstacles to clinical education as viewed by nursing students at Yasuj University of Medical Sciences, final results of which would be evaluated by educational programmers who could make great effort to improve the clinical skills of nursing students by reorganizing the current clinical courses.

2. Literature review

In the research done by Rahimi and Ahmadi (2005) at Tehran University of Medical Sciences, the quality of clinical education regarding the working environment and educational facilities were reported by trainers to be average, while other related conditions were complained about as poor. The lack of enthusiasm and motivation in students at working environment was mentioned as the most challenging obstacle to clinical education, which then invited policy-makers and academic programmers to arrange suitable nursing courses for clinical studies, as the best solution available to recuperate the current situation (9).

In another research done by Abedini and colleagues (2006-2007) at Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences, the most important problems of clinical education as viewed by students were insufficient facilities (71.2%), lack of suitable workplace for internship (39%), inadequacy of training aids to be employed in clinical environment (37.3%), lack of facilities and resources in educational centers (35.6%), and finally, lack of experienced and proficient trainers in clinical environments (35.6%) (10).

3. Methodology

The present research has been conducted descriptively in 2009. The examined population was nursing students who were required to have at least one course of clinical education passed in their studies. Sampling was done as a census covering the whole population to be surveyed. The questionnaire, data collection instrument, was designed based on scientific instructions and consultations with several university professors and undergraduates. Every sheet consisted of questions regarding personal information (age, sex, degree, etc.), as well as questions regarding the troublesome obstacles to learning clinical skills, divided into four sections; trainer, environment, educational program, and student, responses of which

were scored according to a 5-point Likert model ranging from the highest item "strongly agree" to the lowest "strongly disagree". Content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by expert opinions, and its reliability was assessed through a pilot experiment, surveying 10 students at 10-day intervals ($r=0.81$). Having met the correspondents in person upon their permission, interviewers explained the goals, terms and conditions of participation in the study, and also giving students the right to withdraw if not interested. Next, the survey sheets were handed out to sample students to fill in. Finally, all the obtained data were gathered to be described by statistical parameters and analyzed by independent T-test. Furthermore, SPSS 17 was used as statistical software in order to analyze the data.

4. Results and Discussion

According to the obtained results, the majority of samples under study (79.6%) were female whose age ranged from 20 to 27 years old and were averagely 22.37 ± 1.45 . Moreover, 90.7 percent of the students were Bachelors of Science. The final results regarding the influential obstacles a trainer faces to carry out clinical skills education includes: unclarified educational goals to be pursued in the beginning of internship (85.9%), insufficient experience and proficiency of trainers (23.9%), unfamiliarity of trainers with modern methods of clinical education (60.2%), poorly supported students in clinical environments (32.2%), frustrating effect of trainers on students' career prospects (25.9%), unnecessary jobs assigned to students (25%), lack of appropriate evaluation criteria (13.9%), poor communication between trainer and student (29.6%), lack of practical test to be taken at workplace (52.8%), absence of the trainer in urgently needed hours (60.2%). The opinions of students concerning the challenges to learning clinical skills and the obstacles felt in environment and facilities have been illustrated in table 1, followed by table 2 showing the obstacles felt by students. As to the aspect of education program, several challenges were stated: poor communication between students and nursing staff (62.1%), failure of students in maintaining disciplines (77.8%), practicing clinical examinations without the help of a trainer (36.1%), resorting to the routine activities of workplace (42.6%), unfamiliarity of students to the laws and regulations in clinical education.

Clinical education can be defined as a series of activities to facilitate learning in a clinical environment in which trainer and student are equally engaged. Purpose of such a program is to create measurable.

Changes in students. Accordingly, the present research has been conducted to identify the obstacles to clinical education from the viewpoint of nursing

students of Yasuj University of Medical Sciences. The final results indicated that the most challenging obstacles a trainer may face to carry out clinical skills education are un clarified educational goals to be pursued in the beginning of internship and unfamiliarity of trainers with modern methods of clinical education, both of which are consistent with the research done on Tehran's nursing schools by Rahimi and Ahmadi (2005) (9). However, lack of practical test to be taken at workplace and absence of the trainer in urgently needed hours is two other obstacles to clinical education at Yasuj University of Medical Sciences, none of which have been mentioned in the compared research. The most challenging obstacles regarding the working environment and facilities were undetermined duties and obligations of interns, which is consistent with the results obtained by Abedini and colleagues (2006-2007) at Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences (10). Undetermined duties and obligations of interns is the same problem

reported in the study done by Zeighami (2008) at Shiraz Nursing and Midwifery School (11). Therefore, determining the duties and obligations of interns not only plays an effective role in learning, but it also leads to proper reactions and attitude of nursing staff towards students. Unsuitability of the hours assigned for clinical education was another obstacle which here refers to afternoon shifts that provide very little training field. Unsuitability of the time schedule for internship was yet another obstacle stated by students, which is consistent with the research done by Rahimi and Ahmadi (2005) in Tehran (9). Seen from the students' viewpoint, the obtained results regarding the influence of obstacles on clinical skills education showed the most challenging problem was crowded workplaces with too many students, which is consistent with the research done by Omidvar and colleagues (2003) at Babol University of Medical Sciences (12).

Table 1: Frequency distribution of positive responses from nursing students regarding the hindering influence of working environment and facilities on learning clinical skills

Obstacles	Positive responses (I agree)	
	Frequency	Percentage
Undetermined duties and obligations of interns	54	50
Unsuitability of the hours assigned for clinical education	64	50
Unsuitability of the time schedule for internship	72	66.6
Unsuitability of practical programs and courses	39	36.1
Interference between the working schedule of interns with that of Ph.D. students	44	40.7
Little attention paid to clinical skills in practice	20	18.5
Inconsistency of clinical education with the regular schedule	35	33.4
Non-standard courses of study designed for clinical education	50	46.3

Table 2: Frequency distribution of positive responses from nursing students regarding the obstacles to learning clinical skills

Obstacles	Positive responses (I agree)	
	Frequency	Percentage
Unsuitability of working environments and facilities	28	25
Discrimination between nursing students and those in other majors	27	25
Crowded workplaces with too many students	88	81.5
Improper communication among physicians, nursing staff and students	27	24
Presence of people who come to visit or accompany patients during clinical training	66	61.2
Lack of job security when treating patients or carrying out medical procedures	23	21.3
Inconsistency of theoretical knowledge with practical experiences	31	28.7
Lack of appropriate educational facilities for students in clinical environment	29	26.8

Furthermore, students have complained that presence of people who come to visit or accompany patients during clinical training is another obstacle

which has not been mentioned in other studies. With regard to educational programs, the most important obstacle is improper communication between trainer

and students, which is in contrary with the results obtained by Ghods-Bin and Shafah-Khah (2004) at Shiraz Nursing and Midwifery School. In their research, the majority of samples were happy about the communication between trainer and students. The ability to properly communicate and guide students is one of the greatest characteristics of a successful trainer, which can facilitate the process of learning and ultimately bring about satisfaction to students. Moreover, poor communication between students and nursing staff was another obstacle which is consistent with the research done by Ghods-Bin and Shafah-Khah (2004) in Shiraz (13). In his research, Cheraghi (1998) also obtained similar results at Hamedan University, where midwifery students complained that nursing and paramedics' staff barely cooperated with them at work (14). In the study done by Ghiyasvand (2004) in Tehran, 63 percent of students complained about non-cooperation of nursing staff and improper behavior of personnel and even dissatisfaction with internship courses (15). Hence, it seems necessary to create a sense of responsibility and motivation in the medical and nursing staff as to better dealing with interns, because the collaborative function of nurses in clinical education will eventually help students acquire professional skills over internship courses.

5. Conclusion

There are significant obstacles felt in the four aspects of clinical education, all of which could influence the practical skills of nursing students. Therefore, it seems necessary for educational authorities and trainers to pay more attention to the issue and take useful actions in order to create a desirable clinical learning environment.

Acknowledgements

We wish to express our gratitude to the deputy of research at Yasuj University of Medical Sciences; a supporter who afforded the expenses of this project. Also, many thanks go to all the students who contributed in this study.

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