

Perceived Benefits and Challenges Reported by Early Career Graduates In Providing Family-Focused Nursing Care

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Purpose

The purpose of this research was to understand the perceived benefits and challenges of providing family-focused nursing care in practice as reported by recent graduates of an undergraduate curriculum with an emphasis on family nursing science and practice.

Method

A descriptive phenomenology design with open-ended questions using Qualtrics™ software was sent to recent graduates from MSU, Mankato ($N = 109$). The collected narrative responses ($n = 23$) underwent thematic analysis as described by Speziale & Carpenter (2011) and Spiegelberg (1975).

Results

Nine benefit themes and seven challenge themes were identified and theme summary statements constructed (see tables).

Implications for Practice

- Family-focused knowledge is translated into usual practice while providing care at the bedside.
- Family affirmations encourage the nurse to further engage with the family. Thus, family-focused care appears to contribute to more practice focused on the family.
- Time constraints and working with complex, divergent families were identified a barrier.
- Education and practice systems must focus on ways to minimize feelings of vulnerability in early career graduates as they manage the challenges of nursing practice with families.
- Practice environments with an aim of improving care, may benefit by exploring ways to create time and space for nurses to work with families.
- Academic environments who place the family at the center of educational strategies may advance family nursing and guide students in balancing the challenges of this type of nursing practice.

Benefits

Themes	Communication: Being Informed	Sharing the Experience: Being Included	Trust in Nursing Care	Appreciation of the Nurse	Unity of Purpose	Meaningful Connections	Family care as part of usual practice	Eases the stress and strain	Authenticate the worth of family-focused nursing care
Thematic Summary Statement	Sharing information with the patient and family creates a context through which care is optimized.	Including families in the shared health experience empowers the patient and family to provide competent care.	The nurse's efforts at involving the family supports confidence in the care their loved one receives and promotes family trust and comfort.	Providing family nursing care affirms the value of family care to the nurse.	Family nursing care encourages a oneness and unity among the nurse, family and patient and softens the family experience.	Developing nurse-patient-family relationships deepens the connection and extends care beyond the current health experience.	Providing family nursing as usual care elevates the value of family and merits nursing time.	Family nursing care relieves burden, meets needs and eases the struggle.	Family nursing care provides meaningful work that allows a nurse to honor nursing by doing all that they can with and for the patient and family.

Challenges

Themes	A Discordant Family	Family Absence	Distant and Uninvolved Family	Uniqueness of Each Family	Incongruences	Time Demands	Nurse Vulnerability
Thematic Summary Statement	Disagreement and dissimilar information from family members adds complexity to the health care experience and creates a barrier to the nurse's ability to provide care.	Family absence leaves the patient alone and creates a gap in education and planning.	Families who are physically present, but unengaged, present an obstacle to education and planning.	Families bring unique qualities and cultures that may tax the nurse, yet nurses may revel in coming to understand a family.	When aims are misaligned between the family, patient and/or the nurse, the nurse diverts priority to the patient.	When the nurse feels they have too many time demands, they can become overwhelmed.	Feeling unprepared and emotional reactions contribute to making the nurse vulnerable to feeling unguarded.

Limitations

Data are from a segment of early career graduates. Researchers strived to maintain integrity through investigator triangulation and an audit trail; however, the researchers' role as educators in this curriculum with a family focus is noted.

Conclusions

Results from this study inform faculty and nurses about ways in which early career graduates from a family-focused curriculum experience providing family nursing at the bedside. Providing nursing care for families has potential to guide early career nurses in developing relationships that pose positive and negative impacts. Education and practice systems can partner to support benefits and manage the challenges of new career graduates who strive to provide quality patient and family care. Future research is planned to expand the sample and further examine thematic construction.