A Description of Nurses’ Perception of the Image of Nursing

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LEARNER OBJECTIVES:

1. Analyze the impact of inaccurate stereotypes on nurses’ self-concept.
2. Identify opportunities for self-reflection and self-care related to nursing image.
3. Explore self-care strategies to promote a positive nursing image.

EMPLOYERS: Widener University and Neumann University respectively

NO Conflict of Interest

NO Sponsorship or Commercial Support was received
Guiding Thoughts for the Symposium

❖ Why do negative images of nursing perpetuate?
❖ How do these negative images effect our own image of nursing?
❖ Is there a connection between image and self-care practices?

❖ **AHNA Core Value 5**: Holistic Nurse Self-Reflection and Self-Care
Purpose of the Study

❖ To explore the impact of a professional presentation on participants’ perceptions of the image of nursing.
Study Protocol

- IRB approvals and approval from conference research committee.
- An Informational Letter and the study response form were provided to each attendee upon entering the presentation room.
- At the start of the presentation, the purpose of the study was explained and attendees were asked to participate as they viewed the presentation.
- If attendees chose to participate, they completed their response forms during the presentation and submitted the responses as they left the room.
- The completed and submitted response forms implied consent to participate.
A qualitative descriptive design allowed participants to reflect on the image of nursing.

Participants viewed a power point presentation that included an extensive discussion of the literature and embedded film clips that represented nursing stereotypes.

At various points in the presentation questions were posed by the researchers to allow for reflection on these images and the content of the presentation itself.

Participants were asked to respond to each question, on a form provided by the researchers.
Study Questions

❖ Before attending this presentation, what was your perception of the image of nursing?

❖ How does the public’s view of the image of nursing impact the way you view yourself as an nurse?

❖ How do you think nursing’s image impacts recruitment and retention into the nursing profession?

❖ After attending this presentation how did your attitudes or beliefs about the image of nursing change?
Participants

- Total number = 43
- Ranged in age from 24 to 84 years of age
- Practice years of experience ranged from one to 63 years
- RNs = 79%
- APNs = 21%
- Degree: 41.8% doctoral; 32.5% Masters; 22.3% BSN; 2.3% ADN
Data Analysis

- Qualitative description allowed for insight into the participants' perspectives of the image of nursing.
- Data were analyzed using content analysis, with each question looked at independently and as a part of the whole.
- An audit trail was maintained by the researchers.
- An expert in qualitative research provided validation for the data analysis process.
Findings

Four themes emerged from the data

❖ An Evolving Identity
❖ In Defense of the Profession
❖ Reality to Retain
❖ The Greater Voice
An Evolving Identity

Before attending this presentation, what was your perception of the image of nursing?

- Images varied: mixed; evolving profession; split between trusted and controlling hag; lack of understanding for roles/practice settings’ lack of self-care; “sexy”; MDs have staff call themselves nurses
- Described image in terms: trusted and caring; poor media portrayals; subservient to MDs; needs improvement; negative/poor
Marcinowicz, Owłasiuk & Perkowska (2016) explored the ways experienced nurses in Poland view their profession using focus groups involving nurses who had between 8 and 33 years of work experience.

“The findings revealed factors which influence the perception of the nursing profession in Poland, that is the system of education, professional experience and the current situation in which nurses perform their roles. Nurses’ current perception of the job may have negative consequences both for nurses themselves (e.g. burnout) and for the whole profession (e.g. negative selection). Nurses should aim to fulfil leadership roles and participate in the management of health policy so as to have greater influence on healthcare planning” (p. 336)
In Defense of the Profession

How does the public’s view of the image of nursing impact the way you view yourself as an nurse?

❖ Public lack of understanding of the role of the nurse
❖ Not smart enough to be a doctor
❖ Feels defensive; needs to defend the role
❖ Disconnect between personal/profession and public perceptions
❖ Creates uncomfortable moments with patients who believe old stereotypes
❖ Jokes contain sexual overtones
Discussion

The literature supports a continued focus on the need to address the perception of image by nurses and the public

❖ Hoeve, Jansen and Roodbol (2014) performed a review of the literature, focusing on nursing’s public image, self-concept, and professional identity.

❖ Eighteen studies were included with a key finding that nurses partly self-create their image.

❖ The public image was often distorted, viewing the nurse as the stereotypical angel or heartbreaker, and lacking autonomy as healthcare providers.

❖ Hoeve et al. also concluded there was a theme related to identity that was tied to studies focusing on “poor communication of nurses with the public and the invisibility of nurses in the media” (p. 305).
Reality to Retain

How do you think nursing’s image impacts recruitment and retention into the nursing profession?

❖ Lack of understanding of what nurses from nurses entering the profession
❖ Not valued or respected
❖ Impacts who we recruit
❖ Students coming in have sense of entitlement
❖ Can recruit but then reality check when enter practice
❖ Impacts salaries and faculty shortage
❖ Hard work; believe being a doctor is better
Discussion

- Healthy work environments have been shown to improve quality of care and patient safety.
- Job satisfaction and retention of nurses are also improved with Healthy work environments.
- Respect for registered nurses and good communication and collaboration with the interprofessional team contribute to these environments (Huddleston et al., 2017).
The Greater Voice

After attending this presentation how did your attitudes or beliefs about the image of nursing change?

❖ Subtheme of increasing personal awareness
❖ Personal attitude toward image more important then they thought
❖ Have to face reality; encourage dialogue and action
❖ Wanting a better voice and more positive discussions
❖ Need for more recognition
❖ Some were shocked or saddened about pervasive stereotypes
Discussion

- Girvin, Jackson, & Hutchinson (2016) conducted a systematic review and narrative synthesis to examine the public’s understanding and perceptions of nursing.
- Four main themes were identified: (1) media portrayal of nursing as a troubled profession; (2) entertainment value in demeaning nursing; (3) role incongruity – nursing trusted but not respected; and (4) nursing roles remain poorly understood.
- The researchers determined there is evidence of strong public trust which is attributed to respect for nurses, but not necessarily understanding of the work.
Self-Care Practices

Positive talk/Affirmations
  Rest
  Creativity
Brain Health
Exercise
Nutrition
Mandalas
Movie night/Book club

Aromatherapy
Biofeedback
Massage
Tai chi
Gardening
Reflexology
Music
Self-Care Practices

Pet therapy  Rest
Painting    Cloud watching
Meditation  Compliments file
Sleep       “Goof” around
Yoga        Create a deliberate habit
Nature      Be selfish
Self-soothing  Mindful attention
Laugh       Oxygenate
Labyrinth

Laugh  Labyrinth

Mindful attention
Elements of Supportive Environments

Strong network
Self-care spaces
Engagement with the Public
Trust
Compassion
Transparency

Care for self & others
Autonomy
Collaboration
Communication
Respect
Empowerment
Teamwork
Conclusions and Implications

- Globally nurse educators play an important role in the socialization of undergraduate students from their first year through graduation. They can assist students to develop a positive professional image and support students’ development throughout their education.

- These negative stereotypes have caused stress in practicing nurses, therefore the need for self-care is heightened.

- This study provided practicing nurses an opportunity to self-reflect on their perceptions of image, and participant responses support continuing this dialogue with students and practicing nurses alike to provide context and correct inaccurate stereotypes.
Conclusions and Implications

❖ Allowing negative stereotypes to perpetuate has implications for retention and recruitment of nurses at a time when many countries are faced with a severe nursing shortage.

❖ When nurses are viewed from a negative perspective, roles can become ineffective when collaborating with persons receiving care or partners in the health care community.

❖ There is opportunity for interprofessional collaboration, on a global level

❖ This study used a unique methodology to collect data.

❖ Future research to further link image to self-care.

❖ Raising the voice for all nurses!
“For what is the present, after all, but a growth out of the past?”

Walt Whitman
-American Poet, Civil War ‘Nurse’

http://www.abm-enterprises.net/artgallery.html