Exarnining Attitudes and Beliefs About Obesity in Baccalaureate Undergraduate Nursing Students
Dianne Daniels, PhD, RN, CNE
Department of Nursing, Division of Applied Health Sciences, Pfeiffer University, Misenheimer, NC

Background

Healthcare providers are aware that obesity is a major health threat and epidemic in the U.S. Based on the growing numbers of obese individuals, every nursing student can expect to provide care for at least one obese client in the clinical setting before graduation. Nurse educators must address the potential influence of societal attitudes on students’ perceptions and assist students in identifying unwarranted prejudice toward the obese client. Negative attitudes or erroneous beliefs potentially affect the quality of care provided to obese clients.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes and beliefs affecting the care of obese clients in undergraduate junior and senior nursing students.

Project Description

Two surveys, The Attitudes Toward Obese Persons Scale (ATOP) and the Beliefs About Obese Persons Scale (BAOP) will be used for data collection. The instruments are psychometrically sound with high internal consistency. Data processing models will include descriptive and between-group statistical procedures. Demographic data collected includes identified gender, age, and academic year.

Educators must address students’ negative attitudes and erroneous beliefs and assist students in identifying unwarranted prejudice toward obese clients.

- Do undergraduate nursing students possess negative attitudes toward obese individuals?
- To what extent do undergraduate nursing students believe that obesity is under personal control?
- To what extent do undergraduate nursing students understand obesity is multifactorial and complex?
- Do attitudes and beliefs toward obesity vary by academic year status of the students?

Significance to Nurse Education

The findings of the study will help the researcher to discover the extent of negative attitudes and erroneous beliefs regarding the obese individual across academic levels of nursing students. This knowledge will inform nurse educators regarding the need for obesity educational intervention at particular periods during the educational trajectory of the undergraduate nursing student. Building on this project, an obesity educational intervention designed to improve attitudes and beliefs could be implemented at the appropriate academic level. An intervention, if deemed effective, could eventually develop into a standard component of classroom instruction related to obesity content for students enrolled in pre-nursing or upper division nursing.

Future Research

The proposed research study will help to address the gaps in current knowledge regarding prejudices and misconceptions that potentially hinder the quality of care to the obese client from nursing students at various levels during their education.

References