Nursing Specialty and Primary Ambulatory Care Education

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Background

- Registered nurses work across a variety of health care settings
  - Including specialty, primary, and ambulatory care
- Research team experienced acute care focus during education
- Health care is shifting emphasis from hospital to community and home settings
  - Patients are now discharged earlier from the hospital due to financial and logistical pressures of the healthcare system in the United States (Haas & Swan, 2014).
- Registered nurse roles outside acute care include providing effective education and support in order to prevent hospital admission when patients are undergoing a wide range of procedures and treatments (Haas & Swan, 2014).
- Value of a registered nurse (Fortier, et al., 2015; Ladden, et al., 2013)
  - Improved: quality of care, patient safety, overall patient satisfaction
  - Financially: reduced cost of services and improved cost effectiveness
- Focusing nursing education largely on acute care can limit the scope of practice of a future nurse (Fortier, et al., 2015).

Project Objectives

- Discover nursing students’ perspective on their exposure to specialty, primary, and ambulatory care during nursing school
- Determine if nursing students’ exposure to specialty, primary and ambulatory care play a role in their chosen career path after graduation

Project Description

- Step 1: Study designed and survey created and formatted in Qualtrics to:
  1) Describe clinical experiences of current undergraduate nursing students
  2) Assess where students want to work after graduation and in next 5-10 years
  3) Examine where students perceive nurses work today
- Step 2: Participants recruited by a variety of methods:
  1) Email database compiled using NLN website to invite nursing school deans to invite their students to participate in survey
  2) National Student Nurses’ Association (NSNA) distributed invitations to participate in our survey via their email list of students
  3) Personal contacts and social media utilized to invite other undergraduate nursing students to participate in survey
- Step 3: Survey yielded 811 completed responses, representing 47 out of 50 states (excluding Hawaii, Montana, and Vermont) and the District of Columbia

Findings

- Finding 1: In the sample, 67.3% of students surveyed reported having greater than 30 clinical sessions in hospitals; 20-58% of students had no clinical sessions in other settings listed including ambulatory and primary care centers (Fig. 1)
- Finding 2: Findings show that 88.8% of students want to work in the hospital after graduation; 82.5% of student still put working in a hospital as their first choice for work in 5-10 years. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in reality, 61% of nurses work in acute care (Fig. 2)
- Finding 3: More students from four-year nursing programs (95.2% from any type of BSN program) want to work in hospitals than students from ADN programs (79.4%) or RN to BSN programs (71.3%). The difference between BSN and ADN nursing student responses is statistically significant in chi square goodness of fit (X^2 = 4.277, p=0.039).
- Finding 4: Four-year nursing programs have a higher percentage of students who report greater than 30 clinical sessions in a hospital. 69.8% of four-year nursing students have 30 or more clinical sessions in a hospital as compared to two-year ADN (54.8%) and RN to BSN (36.1%). These differences were found to be statistically significant (X^2 = 9.867, p=0.007).
- Finding 5: When comparing the number of hospital clinical sessions to where nursing students want to work via a chi square test for independence, we found that the two variables are related (X^2 = 13.855, p=0.001)

Conclusions and Implications

- In general, survey results suggest that nursing students are less prepared for the healthcare of tomorrow than they need to be.
  1) Students reported having the majority of clinical experiences in the hospital, while many have no exposure to primary and ambulatory care, suggesting that students are not adequately prepared for these additional healthcare settings.
  2) Students also reported an increased likelihood of working in a hospital both after graduation and in five to ten years, which suggests that nursing students today are unwilling to work in settings with greater need such as primary, ambulatory, and specialty care settings.
  3) Data comparing the number of hospital clinical sessions to where nursing students want to work suggests that students are more likely to work in a hospital setting if they had greater number of rotations in a hospital setting.
- Nursing students, along with nurse educators, must broaden their education and understanding of patient education, continuity of care, transitions in care, and chronic disease management extending beyond the walls of the hospital setting.
- As the value of the registered nurse in primary and ambulatory settings steadily increases as demonstrated by positive outcomes, nursing students and educators can support this shift.
- This survey’s findings support the AAACN’s findings that “new curricula and practice models will be required from nursing schools and colleges across the nation to prepare future nurses to function in primary and/or ambulatory care practice and ultimately serve as change management and transitional care leaders” (AAACN, 2012).

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Figure 1: The number of students who reported having clinical rotations in various health care setting. A clinical session was defined as 8-12 hours spent in one setting.

Figure 2: The percentage of students who want to work in various health care settings after graduation and in 5 to 10 years as compared to the percentage of nurses who work in each of the health care settings currently.