



THE SPECIFICITY OF TEACHING AND EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT NURSE'S WORK IN THE OPINION OF STUDENTS

SPECYFIKA PRACY PIELĘgniARKI ŚRODOWISKA NAUCZANIA I WYCHOWANIA W OPINII STUDENTÓW

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. The basic legal acts specifying provisions of the Act on healthcare services financed from public funds are regulations on work and duties of the nurse in the teaching and education environment (a school hygienist): Regulation of the Minister of Health of 28 August 2009 on the organization of preventive health care for children and adolescence and the Regulation of the Minister of Health of 24 September 2013 on the guaranteed services in the field of primary care.

Aim. The aim of this study was to present the specificity of teaching and education environment nurse's work in the opinion of nursing students.

Material and Methods. The study was conducted in the winter semester of the academic year 2016/2017 among third-year students of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Nursing and Midwifery, Medical University of Lodz. Among the respondents there were 86 women and 6 men. The study used the method of the author's own diagnostic survey. The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions (open and closed), concerning, among others, perception and evaluation of nurses' work in the educational environment interest in professional work in the medical school and evaluation of knowledge and skills, gained in the course of classes in medical school.

Results. Striking is the fact that the vast majority of respondents – 78.3% – did not express interest in working as a school nurse.

Conclusions. The organization of preventive childcare and care of the youth within the primary health care system needs to be modified.

KEYWORDS: nurse, environment and education, student.

STRESZCZENIE

Wstęp. Podstawowymi aktami prawnymi, uszczegóławiającymi zapisy Ustawy o świadczeniach opieki zdrowotnej finansowanych ze środków publicznych, są rozporządzenia regulujące pracę i zadania pielęgniarki w środowisku nauczania i wychowania (hygienistki szkolnej): Rozporządzenie Ministra Zdrowia z dnia 28 sierpnia 2009 roku w sprawie organizacji profilaktycznej opieki zdrowotnej nad dziećmi i młodzieżą oraz Rozporządzenie Ministra Zdrowia z dnia 24 września 2013 r. w sprawie świadczeń gwarantowanych z zakresu podstawowej opieki zdrowotnej.

Cel. Celem pracy było przybliżenie specyfiki pracy pielęgniarki środowiska nauczania i wychowania w opinii studentów pielęgniarska.

Materiał i metody. Badanie zostało przeprowadzone w sezonie zimowym w roku akademickim 2016/2017 wśród studentów III roku Wydziału Nauk o Zdrowiu Oddział Pielęgniarstwa i Położnictwa Uniwersytetu Medycznego w Łodzi. Wśród ankietowanych było 86 kobiet i 6 mężczyzn. W badaniu zastosowano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego (ankiety) własnego autorstwa. Kwestionariusz składał się z 12 pytań (otwartych i zamkniętych) dotyczących m.in. percepcji i oceny pracy pielęgniarki w środowisku nauczania i wychowania, zainteresowania pracą zawodową w medycynie szkolnej oraz ewaluacją wiedzy i umiejętności, kształconych w toku zajęć z przedmiotu medycyna szkolna.

Wyniki. Zastanawiający jest fakt, że zdecydowana większość badanych – 78,3% – nie wyraziła zainteresowania pracą jako pielęgniarka szkolna.

Wnioski. Organizacja opieki profilaktycznej nad dziećmi i młodzieżą szkolną w ramach systemu podstawowej opieki zdrowotnej wymaga modyfikacji systemowych.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: pielęgniarka, środowisko nauczania i wychowania, uczeń.

Introduction

The basic legal acts specifying the provisions of the Act on health care services financed from public funds [1] are regulations on work and duties of a nurse in the teaching and education environment (school hygienist):

Regulation of the Minister of Health of 28 August 2009 on the organization of preventive health care for children and adolescence [2] and the Regulation of the Minister of Health of 24 September 2013 on the guaranteed services in the field of primary care [3].

Under these regulations, the nurse cares for students from grades 1 (i.e. from the age of 6) to the last grade of the upper secondary school (that is, usually until 18–19). Soon, as a result of the implemented reform of the education system in Poland, the naming change should be expected – in connection with the elimination of lower secondary schools, the name ‘upper secondary schools’ will disappear.

The basic duties of a nurse who takes care of students include:

- performing screening tests, which are the initial identification of undiagnosed diseases, disorders or defects;
- management of post-screening proceedings in relation to students with a positive test result in order to confirm or rule out the suspicion of disorders revealed in this test;
- active counselling for students with health problems;
- caring for students with chronic diseases and disabilities, including the implementation of nursing services, treatments and medical procedures necessary to perform on the student during his/her stay at school, only on the basis of a medical order and in consultation with the primary care doctor, on whose list of beneficiaries there is a student
- providing pre-medical help in case of a sudden illness, injury and poisoning;
- advising the school head regarding safety conditions for pupils, the organization of meals and sanitary conditions at school;
- oral health education;
- conducting group fluoride prophylaxis among primary school students (grades I–VI) in areas where fluoride levels in drinking water do not exceed 1 mg / l by supervised tooth brushing with fluoride preparations 6 times a year, every 6 weeks ;
- participation in planning, implementation and evaluation of health education [4].

In addition, the nurse is obliged to respect students' rights to information, privacy and intimacy, keep medical records and improve qualifications in the field of preventive care for children.

The education of nursing students takes into account the above-mentioned areas of teaching and education environment nurse's work in both theoretical and practical aspects. The study of the effectiveness of the teaching process allows its further moderation and improvement, which is the main goal of this research. It provides valuable information about the perception of the teaching content within the subject, but also illus-

tes the state of students' awareness: their ideas about nurse's work, the assessment of career prospects, as well as the intellectual maturity of young people to do the job of a nurse.

Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to present the specificity of teaching and education environment nurse's work in the opinion of nursing students.

Material and Methods

The study was conducted in the winter semester of the academic year 2016/2017 among third-year students of the Faculty of Health Sciences Department of Nursing and Midwifery, Medical University of Lodz. Among the respondents there were 86 women and 6 men. The study used the method of a diagnostic survey of his own authorship. The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions (open and closed), concerning, among others perception and evaluation of teaching and education environment nurse's work, interest in professional work in the medical school and the evaluation of knowledge and skills, gained in the course of classes in medical school.

Results

The 92-person group of respondents were students of the last year of undergraduate studies in nursing. According to the traditions of the profession, women constituted 93.4%; while men made up only 6.5% of the group. The study covered a group of the third year students who completed the cycle of classes in basic health care – school medicine and the education stage at the undergraduate level, enabling them to do the job of a nurse.

The questionnaire opened with the question about the willingness to take up a job of a nurse in the teaching and education environment. It is interesting to note that the vast majority of respondents – 78.3% – did not express interest in this kind of work (**Figure 1**).

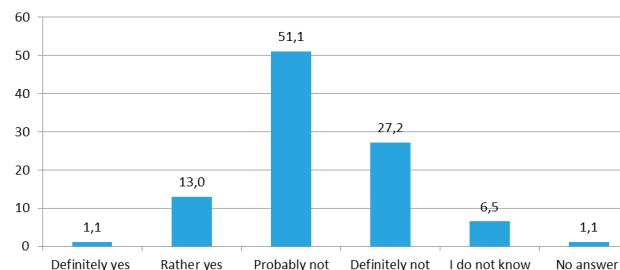


Figure 1. The students' interest in working as a nurse in the teaching and education environment

Source: author's own analysis

Some respondents do not associate their future with the profession of a nurse at all; for others, there are more attractive specialties, and consequently – jobs in the profession. The table below shows the answers to the question in what types of medical units they would like to work as nurses (**Table 1**). From the list of potential workplaces, the respondents indicated three according to the selection order (1 indicates the place of the first choice, 3 – the place indicated as last one). In this way, we have obtained a kind of ranking of jobs according to students of the 3rd year of nursing.

Table 1. The most attractive jobs to do the job of a nurse

	1		2		3	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
SOR	29	31,5	14	15,2	12	13
A hospital ward	49	53,3	25	27,2	6	6,5
Dialysis unit	5	5,4	21	22,8	22	23,9
POZ Clinic	2	2,2	9	9,8	7	7,6
Specialist clinic	4	4,3	13	14,1	16	7,4
School / educational facility	0	0	2	2,2	11	11,9
Rest-home	0	0	1	1,1	10	10,8

Source: author's own analysis

The place of the first choice was usually the hospital ward (without defining the specialty), indicated by more than half of the respondents; every third student would choose a hospital emergency department. Significantly, no person indicated the school. Even in the places of the second and third choice, the school was the last choice. It turns out that the work of a nurse in teaching and education environment does not look attractive, although it might seem otherwise as it does not involve physical effort.

Although most people do not perceive the work of a nurse at school as attractive, we have found the answer to the question which type of school/educational institution the respondent considered the most attractive place of work for a nurse in the teaching and education environment. 25% of respondents indicated primary school, the same number (25%) – secondary school, 16% – kindergarten. For every third student (33.7% of respondents) the type of school did not matter.

In the next question of the survey, students enumerated the school advantages as a workplace: contact with children (40.2%), help for children (26%), independence (7.7%), time and work characteristics (6.6%). The following diagram illustrates the answers (**Figure 2**).

When asked to indicate the disadvantages of nurse's work in the teaching environment, the respondents raised such issues as: a small scope of rights (17.3%), noise (15.2%), workload due to the large number of

students per nurse (13.05), the scope of responsibility (9.7%) – heightened by the fact that a school nurse had to take a lot of decisions or actions on her own, without the possibility of an immediate consultation with another qualified person or a supervisor (**Figure 3**).

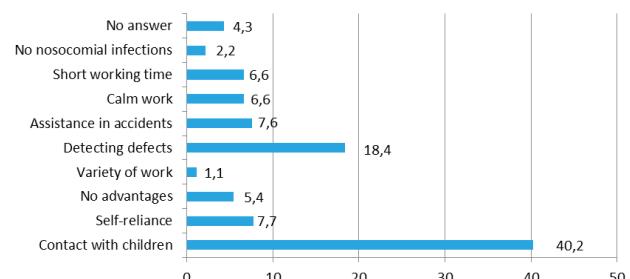


Figure 2. The advantages of doing the job of a nurse in a school environment

Source: author's own analysis

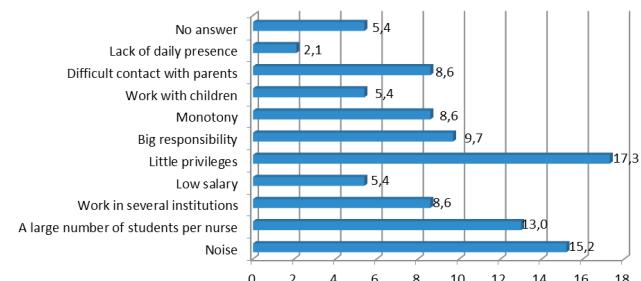


Figure 3. Disadvantages of doing the job of a nurse in a school environment

Source: author's own analysis

In the further part of the survey respondents assessed the current model of health care at schools. In this case, there was a symmetrical division of opinions: 45% of the respondents said that the current system of care at schools was sufficient, while according to 42.4% of respondents – it was not (**Figure 4**).

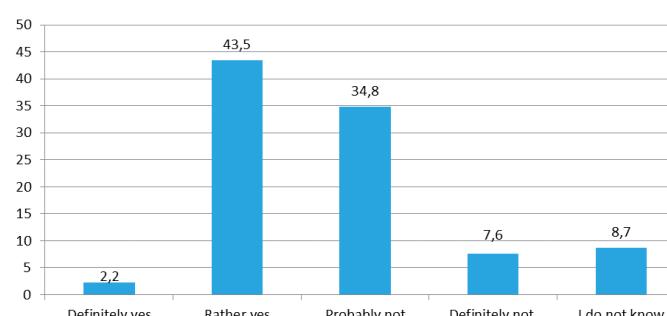


Figure 4. Is the current model of health care in schools sufficient?

Source: author's own analysis

The question about the assessment of nurses' work at schools in which the respondents studied was aimed at expressing a subjective opinion on this topic based on experience and observations. The educational value of this question consists in encouraging reflection on the social dimension of this profession, which is assessed both professionally and socially. Patients are not always able to assess professionalism in the light of specialist knowledge and professional skills of nurses, but they pay attention to the attitude, personal culture and interpersonal competences. All these factors affect the quality of work. Often, it is on their basis that opinions about individual health care workers are formed. The question's purpose was to make students aware of the important role of the psychological aptitude that can be shaped and improved. At the same time, it encourages reflection on what nurse's work at school should look like. In the case of primary schools, 60.9% of respondents expressed a positive assessment of nurse's work, in the case of lower secondary schools – 54.3%, in relation to upper secondary schools – 46.7%. Unambiguously negative assessments appeared in over a dozen percent of surveys, the other participants of the study did not have a good opinion on this matter.

The structure of responses indicates the important role of psychological preparation of candidates for the profession during the studies. The development of public relations skills is also needed from a social point of view. A nurse working at school not only performs strictly medical tasks, but also participates in the educational process of students. The way in which her work and personality are perceived by children and youth shapes the attitude of the young generation to health care institutions. Empathy, sensitivity, tactfulness, and the ability to make contact are indispensable in the described part of the work. The assessment of nurses' work at schools a few years ago is included in students' answers. However, this is a reliable assessment because it is expressed by people with professional preparation.

Questions about the assessment of theoretical and practical classes are of significant importance for the evaluation of classes with students, preparing them for work in the teaching and education environment. Most of the respondents feel substantively prepared to carry out duties and responsibilities of the nurse at school. As the most interesting element of practical classes, 46.7% indicated screening tests (**Figure 5**).

The study also looked at how far school medicine classes were perceived as useful in non-professional life. 2/3 of respondents believe that the knowledge and skills taught during the course of the subject will be useful outside of professional duties (13% of students indicated the answer 'definitely yes', 53.3% – 'rather yes').

The opposite opinion presents a group of over a dozen respondents: 14.1% think that classes will be "rather not" useful in non-professional life, and 3.3% are "definitely" convinced about it.

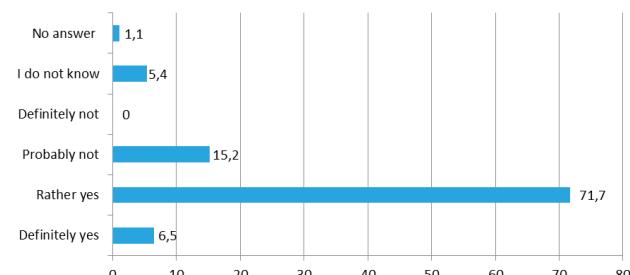


Figure 5. Answers to the question: Did the classes in the course of your studies prepare you / substantively to do the job of a nurse in the teaching and education environment?

Source: author's own analysis

Discussion

In the available literature, similar studies showing the specificity of school nurse's work in the opinion of students were not found. In Polish and foreign literature, publications that stress the role of a nurse working in the teaching and education environment prevail [5–6]. Leading in this field are the experiences and postulates of the American Pediatric Academy, which promotes the concept of developing professional medical care at schools and the so-called school clinics [7].

Nurses working at schools and in educational institutions constitute a relatively small group in the professional background of nurses. According to the Ministry of Health, about 8,000 specialized nurses (including 689 school hygienists) look after 5.2 million pupils, attending 28 thousand primary, junior high and high schools [8–10].

The research shows that candidates for the nursing profession do not associate their future with work in the teaching and education environment. Only 1.1% of respondents are interested in this kind of work. These results correspond to the situation in the country [11]. The analysis of the National Association of Nurses of School Medicine also shows that qualified nursing staff, starting their professional activity, is reluctant to take up employment in teaching and education environment. For this reason, and because of the age structure of the described group of health care workers (high percentage of school nurses and hygienist in pre-retirement and retirement age), there are fears that in a few years there may be a problem of providing preventive health care for students [12].

The range of tasks of nurses working in particular types of schools and educational institutions has an individual specificity. It is conditioned by the age of stu-

dents/pupils. There are other responsibilities for nurses in the field of supervision over personal hygiene for a child in the kindergarten or in the lowest grades of primary school, and other ones in the case of teenagers in high schools or technical schools. From the authors' own research it results that students experience greater uncertainty in contact with younger children. Yet another is the work pattern of nurse's work in special schools, which are attended by children with physical or mental disabilities. In this case, not only activities resulting from standards in preventive health care are necessary, but also close cooperation with the child's specialists and guardians [13].

The profession of a nurse is connected with constant contact with people of various age groups and requires the ability to cooperate and readiness to help. The core of nurses' work in the teaching and education environment are children and youths – especially those requiring the attention of the recipient of the medical market. As regards the care of pupils, nurse responsibilities include in particular screening tests. These include, *inter alia*, periodic anthropometric measurements, tests of visual acuity and hearing, assessment of posture, measurement of blood pressure [14]. The implementation of the above-mentioned tasks allows the observation of children's development and diagnosis of health problems. This is a particularly important aspect of the nurse's work because of the objective priority: the initial identification of possible disorders and problems [15]. The number of disabled students seems to increase, as evidenced by the observed increase in the percentage of children with disorders within the musculoskeletal system, sight or hearing. Data from the Health Protection Information Systems Center (CSIOZ) show that changes in the spine, chest, pelvis, lower and upper limbs constitute a total of 45–55% of total postural defects [16]. Considering the advantages of work in the profession, the respondents indicated the possibility of the early detection of specific health problems in children, which is part of the professional mission of providing help and results from the pro-social motives of choosing a career in nursing.

Nurses at school are the only qualified medical staff and have a special role in the teaching and education environment due to the scope of responsibility. High qualifications and effectiveness in action, both in planned activities, resulting from the scheduled tasks, screening or health promotion, as well as in emergency situations related to health risk and life emergency are required from this professional group. In the light of the current legal status, doing the job of a nurse at school or in the educational establishment requires the completion of specialization training or a qualification course in

the field of nursing in the education or teaching environment. The right to work in school preventive care is also provided by a nurse holding a master's degree in nursing and at least three years of work experience in primary care. A school nurse can also be a school hygienist [17]. According to the Ministry of Health, the interest in raising qualifications as part of postgraduate education in school medicine is relatively small. In the years 2002–2013, only 134 nurses were qualified as nurses in the field of nursing in the education and teaching environment and the qualification courses were completed by 3748 people [18].

What affects the low popularity of the described specialization? The profession of a 'school' nurse seems marginalized and underestimated. Over the last three decades, the scope of duties and powers has gradually decreased. Despite the scientific and technical progress and raising the health awareness of the society, one can get the impression that the needs of medical care in schools are greater. It should be mentioned here that the nurse should perform at school not only strictly medical tasks, mentioned earlier, but also actively participate in programming the educational and preventive work of the school and implement tasks in the field of health education [19, 20]. Currently, school nurses can be completely overlooked in the organization of pedagogical work related to the state of health. An example is the situation in one of the Lodz junior high schools, where in the preventive program the task of conducting classes on the period of girls' puberty was entrusted not to a qualified nurse, but a representative of the company - a distributor of hygiene articles [21].

Considering other factors, discouraging students and nursing graduates to work as nurses in the teaching and education environment, the phenomenon of noise is also worth analyzing. For experienced nurses, it does not seem to be a major problem, however, after completing practical classes at school, students indicated that noise was a serious disadvantage that negatively affected the health and well-being of employees and the students themselves [22]. The tests carried out in Polish and foreign schools showed noise as an unfavorable factor. According to analyzes of the National Institute of Hygiene, corridors constitute the loudest places at schools; in case of primary schools, the measurements gave an average score of 83 dB, which is almost equal to the traffic noise, while in upper secondary schools – 76 dB. A similar problem of high noise level is also found in English, German or Swedish schools [23].

According to the students' opinion, another disadvantage of nurse's work at school is too many pupils per nurse. This indicator is based on the principles developed by the School Medicine Department of the Mother

and Child Institute. When determining the number of students on preventive health care by a nurse, the type of school is taken into account, and in case of schools attended by students with disabilities – their number and a degree of disability. Since January 1, 2011, at schools in which the number of pupils ranges from 400-499, a nurse or a school hygienist should be at work not less than 3 times a week, minimum 4 hours a day. At schools with 300–399 students, a nurse should be present at least twice a week for 4 hours a day. In smaller schools, a nurse should be available once a week for 4 hours [17]. The existing recommendations – although they operate with minimum values – in practice are becoming the norm that sets the working time of nurses in most public schools. This is mainly due to economic reasons. As a consequence, the status quo means that the nurse must take care of several schools to ensure full-time employment. It is also connected with the necessity to commute between institutions, which is especially troublesome in smaller towns. The described situation also does not provide comfort in dealing with students, and is particularly problematic for schools – the absence of a school nurse causes that medical duties must be carried out by teachers.

Among other disadvantages of the profession, affecting its perception on the labor market, the respondents indicated a relatively low remuneration compared to other groups. This problem has been causing negative emotions for a long time. It should be added that financing the services of nurses in school medicine is based on the capitalization rate, which is the lowest among basic health care services. A higher pay is provided to nurses who take care of students in special and integration schools, in special educational centers – there the rate of admission is higher than the standard rate and depends on the degree of the child's disability [24].

Conclusions

1. The presented results prove that the majority of surveyed students do not associate professional plans with nursing care and educational environment.
2. In the process of educating candidates for the nursing profession, one should give the right rank to school medicine, shaping – along with professional competences – the psychological aptitude.
3. The organization of preventive care for children and schoolchildren as part of the primary care system requires system modifications, the effect of which should be the increase of availability of nursing care at schools, improvement of the quality of the health care system for young Poles and effective pro-health education.

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