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## The viewpoint of nursing professors on the teaching of management competencies: a descriptive study

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### ABSTRACT

**Aim:** to determine the viewpoint of professors on developing managerial skills in undergraduate nursing students. **Methods:** an exploratory and descriptive study, using a qualitative approach, undertaken with nine professors of a higher education institute located in Guarulhos, between the months of January and May 2013. The data were systematically evaluated using content analysis. **Results:** five major topics emerged: The development of an academic approach to nursing care; the importance of acquiring techno-scientific knowledge; student's struggles regarding managerial subjects; teaching strategies for bringing theory and practice together; professional managerial skills to be developed in the future. **Conclusion:** the professors made use of the connection between theory and practice to facilitate the process of teaching and learning. They acknowledged the importance of developing managerial competencies, although they could only designate three of them. They point to them as being vital for the development of managerial activities.

**Descriptors:** Nursing; Nursing Research; Education, Nursing; Professional Competence; Teaching.

## INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, the National Curricular Guidelines of the Nursing Graduation Course (DCNs/ENF) describe all the general skills and specific abilities necessary for a nurse to work<sup>(3)</sup>. The DCNs/ENF suggests the construction of a new academic profile, with an emphasis in the skills and abilities developed: health care, decision making, communication, leadership, permanent education, administration and management<sup>(4)</sup>.

Although DCNs/ENF are broadly met during the teaching-learning process<sup>(5)</sup>, there still exists a lack of scientific studies pointing at which skills are discussed in class, the difficulties experienced, and the strategies used for teaching them<sup>(6)</sup>.

## AIM

To determine the viewpoint of professors on the development of managerial skills in students during the undergraduate nursing course.

## METHODS

This is an exploratory and descriptive study of a qualitative approach. Nine professors of nursing of a higher education institution located in the central region of Guarulhos took part. Data collection happened between January and May of 2013 through individual interviews held at the university, guided by a script containing leading questions related to the teaching of managerial skills. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. To analyse the data, thematic content analysis technique was used. The data were then interpreted and supported by the DCs/ENF guidelines, using the

following theoretical conceptual framework: the purpose of the education of a nurse is to provide the professional with the knowledge needed to exercise his/her skills and overall abilities. This study was approved by the Comitê de Ética da Universidade Guarulhos (Guarulhos University Ethics Committee) under the CAAE (Certificate of Presentation for Ethical Consideration) number 02486012.6.0000.5506.

## RESULTS

The analysis of the data resultant from the interview made it possible to bring together the following topics: The development of an academic approach to nursing; the importance of acquiring techno-scientific knowledge; student's struggles regarding managerial skills; teaching strategies for bringing theory and practice together; professional managerial skills to be developed in the future.

## DISCUSSION

The professors recognized that the academic content of the nursing undergraduate course is specially aimed towards assistance, and subjects dealing with nursing care are present throughout most of the undergraduate programme, leaving the managerial subjects to be taught during the last terms of the course. Therefore, students have few opportunities to discuss managerial topics.

The lack of knowledge about management can be perceived during the execution of the nurse's daily tasks as unit and care managers. This reflects directly in the professional life of the future nurse<sup>(7)</sup>, since a major part of the problems stated by healthcare institutions are related to the quality in nursing assistance and

concerns about the ineffectiveness of the nurse's managerial practice<sup>(5)</sup>.

It is important for the student to understand the need to apply the managerial knowledge acquired during the undergraduate course to practice, in such a way as to become a professional capable of combining both healthcare and managerial topics, not allowing the healthcare and managerial dichotomized model that still exists in some healthcare services<sup>(8)</sup> to rule.

The student's lack of training is a reality that goes beyond the professor/student relationship; it is permeated with the idea that the student does not show interest in learning the subject, revealing a scenario in which the professor does not see him/herself as a mediator during the learning process.

In this study the use of active didactic and pedagogical experiences such as role playing, questioning and group dynamics can also be observed while putting the topic into context, in order to promote a better understanding of the subject. These strategies allow the students to picture the real situations they might face. In addition, fears and concerns they experience are discussed inside the classroom, benefiting the teaching and learning process<sup>(9)</sup> and making the educational activity more inclusive.

Professors acknowledge the managerial skills described by the DCN/ENF and see them as vital for the development of managerial activities<sup>(6)</sup>. However, in practice, skills such as leadership, continuing education and health care were not mentioned, which demonstrates the weakness of the academic content of the course.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

A lack of appreciation on the part of students was apparent in terms of the importance of the development of managerial skills. This issue is due to a lack of knowledge regarding the importance of managing human resources and care.

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