

# NURSE STUDENTS CLINICAL PRACTICE – TRAINERS’ PERCEPTIONS

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**Abstract:** Descriptive transversal study aiming to identify the perceptions, barriers and needs for future training of nurses involved in clinical practice of the students of the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery from “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy from Bucharest. The study results identify the positive approach and commitment of nurses from the Burghele Clinical Hospital towards fulfilling their roles and mission in guiding the students practice. Some barriers and future needs were also revealed by the study, providing clues for future direction for improvement in nurse student’s clinical practice.

## INTRODUCTION

In Europe currently, nurse education is organized in a diversity of settings either at the higher educational level, in universities or in nursing schools or colleges.(1)

Nursing practice, as the whole health service delivery, in order to respond to the main challenges the health system are facing in present in almost all the countries, in Romania as well, mainly: the technological development, economic and personnel shortage, the patient current profile in relation with demographic characteristics, information and increased expectation, should continuously evolve. These developments lead to an increased demand with respect to nurses’ whole range of competences. Recent studies suggest that graduating students often lack the knowledge and skills needed to practice effectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.(2)

Consequently, a change in nurse education, including solid skills for continuous professional development, in order to make them capable to meet the modern professional environment, should be set up.

In order to meet these developments and create the theoretical and practical competencies for modern nurses, in the European Union, within the frame of Bologna process, through the Directive 2005/36/EC (the Recognition of Professional Qualifications, modernized by the new 2013/55/EU Directive, set up minimum requirements on length and content for nurse education. In this context higher education institutions for nurse education, which are obliged to meet those requirements by the accreditation process are challenged to provide training for nurses capable to practise with awareness, compassion and competence and endowed with a high level of independent learning skills.(1,2) According to these legal provisions, the nurse clinical practical training is one of the most important parts of the modern nurse education. The simple fact that it should count for one half of total number of training hours, 2300 of the total of 4600, is expressing the importance of practical training in nurse competence equation.(3,4,5)

The national legislation, transposing the Directive provision, represented by the Government Decision 469/2015 on approval of minimum criteria for authorization and accreditation of study programmes on Medicine, Dental medicine, Pharmacy, nursing, midwives, veterinary medicine and architecture,

replacing the former GD 1477/2003, creates the national frame for the adequate and standardized nurse curriculum at national level. According to this normative act the clinical training is “that part of nurse training in which trainee nurses learn, as part of a team and in direct contact with a healthy or sick individual and/or community, to organize, dispense and evaluate the required comprehensive nursing care, on the basis of the knowledge, skills and competences which they have acquired. The trainee nurse shall learn not only how to work in a team, but also how to lead a team and organize overall nursing care, including health education for individuals and small groups, within health institutes or in the community”. The knowledge and skills acquired related to this training, defined as adequate clinical experience, comprising in “such experience, which should be selected for its training value, should be gained under the supervision of qualified nursing staff and in places where the number of qualified staff and equipment are appropriate for the nursing care of the patient”.(5,6)

Summarizing, according to above prerequisites, contemporary qualified nurse are expected to take initiative not only for health services delivery but also for their own development as active, long life learners. Consequently, the mode how they are trained, how the clinical practice contribute to reach these goals should be carefully planned.

## PURPOSE

The university clinical training, including at least 2300 hours, distributed in 4 years of study, are performed in clinical hospitals under the supervision of the existing nurses. The successful organization of stages requires collaboration and coordination of hospital management, academic teaching staff, nurses’ team, students and finally, patients, requiring not only staff commitment but also a climate supportive for clinical teaching. In the actual context of increasing number of students, complex demands for new competences, that have to be reached through clinical practice and the personnel overload due to already chronic staff shortage in our hospitals, the way how the clinical training is organized and perceived is crucial for the professional development of the future nurses.

How is this training organized, what are the attitudes of the nurses supplementary charged with teaching roles, how

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they perceive these tasks, as factors contributing to a competent, skilled and self confident future nurse, were the main study questions of the study. Also the managerial, organizational aspects were targeted by a group of three questions. Based on the received answers a future better coordination and support for an effective clinical practice will be elaborated and implemented. In this context the objectives of the study were:

- Identifying the nurse perceptions on opportunities offered by involvement in clinical practice,
- Assessment of models, attitudes and practices regarding nurse students clinical practice,
- Identifying the main further educational needs of the nurses involved in clinical practice of students.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study is based on a descriptive approach. The evaluation of the way how the clinical training is organized, perceived and guided in order to ensure competence and value gain for the students was carried out through a quantitative method, by a self-completed questionnaire, administrated in Burgele Clinical Hospital Bucharest, one of the main hospitals where the nurses of are performing clinical practice. The target audience was represented by the team of nurses involved in clinical practice of students from the Faculty for Midwife and Nursing of University of Medicine and Pharmacology Carol Davila Bucharest.

The sample selection was made based on the nursing staff present at work in the hospital in the ten days period for data collection, during February 2016.

The questionnaire “Knowledge, attitude, and practice as trainer for the nurse students“ was designed to collect information on factual aspects as age, experience and on six areas of importance for the clinical teaching process: main activities, methods used, values transmitted, process perception, difficulties encountered and training needs. The questionnaire consisted of closed questions with single or multiple answers, and two questions based on a Likert scale from 1-5.

The self-administered questionnaire was anonymous and confidential, and the statistical analysis was done with no personal reference.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The socio demographic characteristics of the study sample reveal a profile of respondents dominated by women: 40 (93%) of the 43 respondents, corresponding to the normal staff distribution in health care facilities where the women are predominating. From the clinical department affiliation perspective, most of the respondents work on the Urology Department (I, II, III-20) followed by internal medicine (10) and Cardiology.(9)

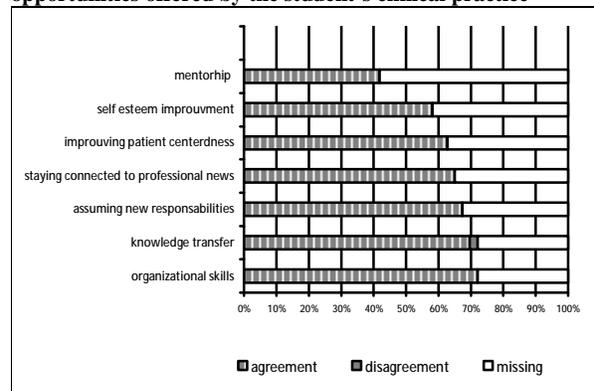
Related to the professional qualification most of the nurses, 27 (62,9%) were graduated from the post high school colleges, followed by the university degree graduates, 13 (30%) and only 3 persons trained by the nurse high school that functioned in Romania during the `80`s.

From the age distribution perspective the sample mean age were 41, 32 years (min 23 years, max 60, SD ±8.03 years). Consequently the associated work experience was quite important, with a mean of 17.58 years (min=0.3, max=39, SD±10.10). Among those, the most of the respondents, 39% are included in the work experience share of 10-20 years and 17 % of them have even more than 21 years of experience. Of these only 6 (14 %) of nurses considered that they have experience in clinical practice, the trainer experience practice being less extensive than the professional one, ranking from 2 to 15 years.

The answers related to the overall perception on personal participation in the clinical practice of the nurse students reveals that most of the respondents 55% (24) considered their involvement as a personal opportunity not as an obligation, as perceived by 34%, the rest of them being not decided. In addition, further asked on what type of opportunities the clinical practice creates for their professional life they perceived that as a chance for exercising their organizational skills 72%, planning the clinical practice in such a way that the most important techniques and cases to reach the students without prejudice to the normal care flow is really important.

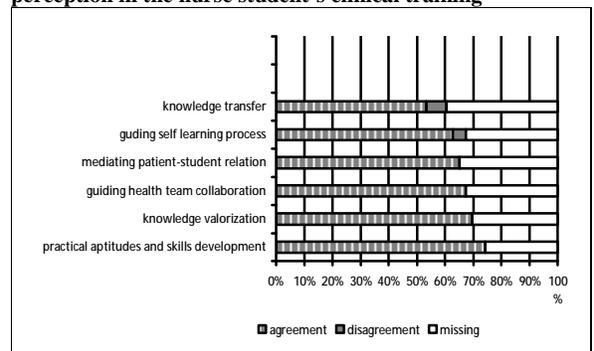
Other types of opportunities identified were: knowledge transfer 69%, the challenge of assuming new roles and responsibilities (69%) as well as the challenge to be connected to the professional news (65%). Interesting is the fact that the clinical practice is seen as a condition for improving the patient centeredness of the medical care act for the patient, in order to represent a model for the students for more 60% of the respondents. Also, participating in this activity is perceived as a chance to improve self esteem 58%. About the mentorship chance, that summarize and extend the professional guidance it reach agreement for less than half of the respondent (42%). (figure no. 1).

**Figure no. 1. Respondent distribution by perceived opportunities offered by the student’s clinical practice**



From their mission perspective in the clinical training process, the practice nurses identified the most important roles as following: development of practical skills, 74%, supporting the exercise of theoretical knowledge gained during the clinical nursing classes, guiding the collaboration and communication with the patient (65%) and health care team (67%), guidance for the self learning process (62%) and the last one, the information and theoretical knowledge transfer function (53%). (figure no. 2).

**Figure no. 2. Respondent distribution on nurse role perception in the nurse student’s clinical training**



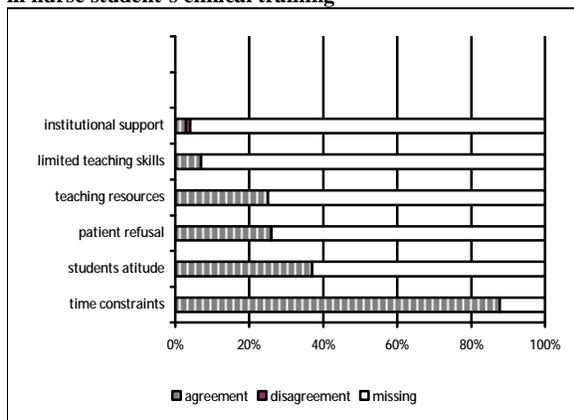
Related to the managerial, organizational aspects of clinical practice main features revealed by the responders were:

- Only a relatively small percent 23% of nurses are involved in the process of planning the clinical activities for the nurse's practice, a result somehow confirming the fact that the clinical practice is perceived as an organizational challenge.
- The main training model adopted are the whole team of nurses-whole group of students model (42%) followed by the medial act cantered method (18%) and by 1 nurse-small team of allotted students (12%).
- The main teaching methods used were: demonstration (67%), active observation (58%), group teaching (30%), active learning and case studies (11%).

The main disturbing factors influencing the process of students clinical practice identified by the respondents were:

- Time constraint was mentioned by 88% of respondents as the main factor negatively influencing the quality of clinical practice. On the background of the chronic personnel shortage granting enough attention to both normal tasks and the teaching process is perceived as difficult for most of respondents.
- The students attitude, the lack of interest and motivation in practising and developing skills based on the theoretical knowledge is identified as the second important barriers by 33% of responders.
- The patient refusal together with the limited teaching resources as instructional materials or even teaching spaces during the clinical practices are perceived as important by about one quarter (22%, 23%) of all respondents.
- The less important, still present, is the institutional support, mentioned by 3% of respondents, identifying one of the prerequisites for a well organized clinical training (figure no. 3).

Figure no. 3. Respondent distribution on the main barriers in nurse student's clinical training

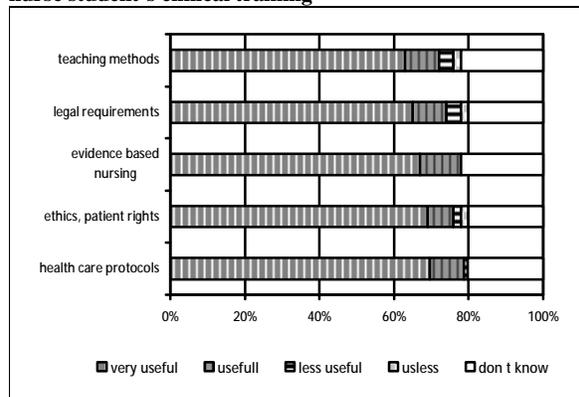


In order to identify another direction of future improvement intervention, a Likert scale questions from 1-5, from very useful- to useless, contribute to identify the hierarchy of future training needs for the nurses involved in students clinical practice. The main direction identified were: content of the health care protocols and clear establishment of the nurse roles in the health care process (70%); updated knowledge on ethics and patient rights (69%), evidence based nursing (67%), legislative framework requirements, (65%) or teaching methods (63%) (figure no. 4).

Those answers are in concordance with the ending overall appreciation question on being a good tutor for the nurse

students where only 34% answer yes, I am a good teacher, while only 2% answer no. The rest of them, the majority, 55%, choose the unconfident, "don't know" answer.

Figure no. 4. Future training nurse for nurses involved in nurse student's clinical training



### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study information results, we can stress the following aspects:

- The nurse student clinical practice is a complex process involving at least tree actors: the student, the patient and the health care team. Their involvement and collaboration is crucial for attracting, guiding and empowering the student in reaching the necessary competences.
- The majority of nurses positively appreciate their role in the student clinical practice, perceived in most cases as a personal opportunity not a professional obligation. By their roles they fulfil a very important task, that one to connect theory with practice completed by guidance and support for collaborating with the health care team and patients. They also contribute to set the coordinates for professional ethics of the future professionals and guiding students in self learning and personal development.
- Their mission is often jeopardized by multiple and complex factors, as student attitudes, patient refusal or resource limitation, all of them on the background of time constraints that also pose serious challenges to even the most committed teaching nurses.

Consequently, in order to reform, improve the transition process of a nursing student in a proficient professional nurse it is important to establish clear outcomes and competences for each of the clinical practice training, specific protocols on effective methods and tools for teaching nurses, completed with adequate organizational, staffing and resource allocation.

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