

Suggestions for fostering competent clinical nurses

Kyung Ja Song, RN, DSN

Nursing Service Department Seoul National University Hospital

Received 4 April 2001, Accepted 18 June 2001

Abstract

Most nurses start their careers as clinical nurses and clinical fields require them to be sensitive to changing medical environments and to absorb current medical and nursing knowledge actively. It is common for new nurses to be frustrated because of a big gap between what they learned at school and what they should practice. Therefore, practical strategies are needed to help nursing students to be well prepared to move to clinical nursing.

Some suggestions are summarized for fostering competent clinical nurses from a clinical nurse's viewpoint.

First, the identity of nursing as a unique discipline should be emphasized at school. Nurses who have clear answers to what nursing is, can have a pride as a nurse and deliver nursing care more productively.

Second, the curriculum of the nursing school should be standardized even though three-year college and four-year university backgrounds co-exist in the same license. Therefore, the school of nursing should guarantee students' abilities to step into clinical nursing.

Third, the school of nursing should utilize expert clinical nurses as clinical professors with adequate compensation. Clinical nurses with master and doctoral degrees will remain in the clinical field long as a linking agent between theory and practice and as a role model.

Fourth, an internship program should be considered to allow nursing students to broaden their scope of nursing and to deepen their clinical experience.

These strategies can also help clinical nursing be accepted as a unique and challenging profession among nurses and other healthcare members.

Keywords

clinical nursing, identity, clinical professor, nursing school

The subject assigned to me today is to suggest some ideas about education of the school of nursing for a competent clinical nurse from a clinical nurse's point of view. I'm not in a position to speak about or criticize the curriculum of the school in detail. I, as an experienced clinical nurse, only want to share with you some of my opinions about strategies helping student nurse transit to clinical nurse.

Hospital is one of the biggest workplace for nurses and nurses do major role in delivering direct and indirect care in hospital. Among medical professionals, nurse will be the closest person for a patient and this position requires very complicated job. Although my experience is confined to the Seoul National University Hospital, clinical nursing is worth devoting ourselves as graduate nurses. I'm going to propose practical suggestions for fostering and retaining good nurses

in the clinical nursing fields. I believe that good clinical nursing will contribute to the development of the science of nursing also.

First, the identity of nursing as a unique discipline should be emphasized at school. Nurses who have clear answer what nursing is and what nurse's job is, can have pride as nurses and can spread the spirit of nursing positively. Although the standpoint can be changed, the learning from the school has deep impact on the identity of the nursing. In case of myself, I didn't realize the fact that nursing as a job is very challenging when I attended school. I could accept the famous definition of nursing as an art and science after I started my job as a new nurse. I should operate my brain immediately mobilizing my knowledge to decide what is most needed and what I can be done for a patient who is

lying before me in a short time. This is the reason why I should be near patient as a nurse. I think that the solid identity of nursing is the primary element for competent clinical nurse.

Second, the standardization of the curriculum is needed. The Seoul National University Hospital recruits about 150 - 200 new nurses each year. They are from all over the country and have very diverse educational background. There was no formal orientation program when I started as a staff nurse. Nowadays, 1-2 month orientation program is provided to facilitate their settlement. SNUH adopted the preceptorship so that preceptor can lead preceptee consistently. In spite of intensive orientation program, most nurses feel difficulties to carry out nurse' job independently and it is not uncommon to drop out in the orientation program. If the 3-year college and 4-year university can not but exist together for the same license, the curriculum should be provided in a standardized fashion. The school of nursing should be able to guarantee the student's ability to step into the clinical nursing.

Third, the school of nursing should utilize expert clinical nurses as teacher. There are many nurses with master and doctoral degree working at the bedside. They can give lectures more vividly and practically in so far as they have good teaching skill. They can link theory and practice and can be a good role model and can spread the nursing spirit to students. This will help to clarify the nursing identity. If qualified, a title of clinical professor can be given to the expert clinical nurse with adequate compensation. This may also encourage expert nurses to remain at the bedside.

Forth, The internship can be applied in the nursing field. The practice requirement is very limited and the students can not catch the role of clinical nurse. Most nurses are very confused when they become new nurses although they had good grade points at school. Its' because there is a gap between what they know and what they should do and they feel difficulties in applying pre-possessed knowledge in the real fields. Some hospitals can use internship with a bad will as cost saving strategies. But internship can be a good choice to help the student nurse level up smoothly.

The fundamental of nursing philosophy has not changed much, but the nursing practice has changed widely according to dramatic development of medical treatment and medical equipment. Nurses should be sensitive to changing medical environments and keep in touch with current medical

and nursing interventions.

For the science of nursing, the basic nursing theory and nursing research are also very important. But the clinical nursing field is also important because this is the spot to express what nursing is and this field provides the valuable resources for the nursing theory and nursing research. More over large proportions of the graduate nurses starts their career as clinical nurse. So students should be well prepared. To introduce student nurses vivid nursing practices, the connections between school and clinical nursing field should be active and for this the school of nursing and hospital nursing service department should communicate with each other systematically.

I, hereby suggested some opinions to strengthen the links between school and hospital, the strengthening of nursing identity, the standardization of curriculum especially in case of 3-year college, the utilization of clinical nurses as clinical professor and the adoption of internship.

I, as a clinical nurse, do hope that bedside nursing be accepted as unique and challenging among nurses themselves and other health care members. So I dare to present some of my personal opinions. I really appreciate your invitation and I'm so happy to have a chance to share my ideas with you Japanese professors.



Author for correspondence

Nursing Service Department, Seoul National
University Hospital
28 Yunkundog, Chongunoku, Seoul 110-744,
Korea
Kyung Ja Song
songkrd@unitel.co.kr