Florence Nightingale, the pioneer of modern nursing, established the first school for nursing education thereby changing the views of the public in favour of formal preparation for becoming a nurse. Thereafter many hospitals established institutions for nursing education.

The Indian Nursing Council (INC) is a statutory body that regulates nursing education in the country through prescription, inspection, examination and certification. The council also prescribes the syllabus and ensures easier measures for equivalence, exchange and practice for nurses in any part of the country. Periodically, to meet the growing needs of the society, the council revises the syllabus. In the previous syllabus, the clinical hours for each subject completed simultaneously along with the course. The students after their BSc Nursing programme would now get an opportunity to work in any of the areas as per the requirement of the hospital.

Need for the study

In 2005, INC completely revised the syllabus of the undergraduate programme and instructed all the colleges throughout the country to follow this new syllabus. Subjects like communication and education technology, pathology and genetics were included in the new syllabus. The salient feature of the new syllabus was inclusion of Internship (Integrated Practice) for 6 months in the final year with two weeks of evening and night duty. The clinical hours in all the areas of nursing were increased namely medical/surgical, paediatrics, mental health, community health, midwifery.

It was believed that the inclusion of internship would definitely prepare students to work as staff nurses in any of the areas.

One way to assess the effectiveness of nursing education curriculum is the degree to which it addresses the patients’ needs in hospital setting. Does this integrated practice prepare students for staff nurse position? To what extent does a student find oneself well equipped with knowledge, attitude and skill? What is the student’s point of view about the internship posting? With a view to find answers to these questions, the investigator conducted the present study.

Objectives

The study was undertaken to: (i) assess the perception with regard to the level of preparation in the three aspects: knowledge, skill and attitude as well as over all level of preparation, and (ii) correlate the extent of preparation for staff nurse position in knowledge, attitude and skill.

Operational definitions

Perception: It refers to the understanding about the gain in the level of preparation as a result of internship posting.

Integrated internship: In this study it refers to six months of clinical posting with supervision in medical surgical nursing, community health nursing, child health nursing, mental health nursing and midwifery areas with two weeks of evening and night duty as prescribed by INC.

Preparation: It refers to the expression of students in the three areas; knowledge, skill and attitude to work as staff nurses, as stated by the students in terms of three levels: Great extent, Some extent and Not at all.

Staff nurse’s position: Refers to competent nurses and midwives who assume the responsibility to provide promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services in any setting.
**Students:** Refers to final year undergraduate nursing students who have completed internship posting.

**Assumptions**
1. Clinical posting is essential for nursing students.
2. Individual differences exist among students.
3. The condition of the patient may differ from time to time and hospital to hospital.

**Materials and Methods**
A descriptive research design was chosen to describe the extent of preparation as expressed by the students. The study participants were the final year BSc Nursing students of Meenakshi College of Nursing, Chennai. The students were posted in two parent hospitals and two affiliated hospitals. The postings were planned in collaboration with the medical and nursing superintendents. Faculty from the college supervised the students during the clinical posting. Since inception in 1998 till now the college has rendered excellent service in the field of nursing education. The college conducts both BSc and MSc Nursing programmes.

**Sampling criteria:** A convenience sampling was adopted.

**Inclusion criteria:** Students who had completed the internship posting. **Exclusion criteria:** Students who had less than 80 percent of attendance during the internship posting were excluded.

**Description of the tool:** The instrument used for the study was a rating scale with two aspects.

Part A consisted of the gender and the area of posting. Part B consisted of a 3-point rating scale with 10 items on knowledge, 15 items on skill and 5 items on attitude. One open-ended question was asked at the end of the tool from the students to express any experience gained at the end of the posting.

**Scoring and interpretation**
The rating scale had 3 points with a score of 3, 2, and 1 for each point. The maximum score for the knowledge, attitude and skill was 30, 15 and 45 and the minimum score was 10, 5, 15 respectively. The total maximum score was 90 and minimum score was 30.

The perception of students regarding integrated internship in the preparation of staff nurse position was categorised into three levels: Great extent, Some extent and Not at all, according to the score of each aspect.

**Scoring interpretation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
<th>Some extent</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Total score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>16-30</td>
<td>1-15</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data collection:** The data was collected on 13 June 2009. The students were approached in the classroom; the purpose of the study was clearly explained to the students and were given an opportunity to decline participation.

**Results**
Among the students, 21 (47%) were females and 22 (53%) were males.

**Knowledge aspect:** With regard to the perception of students regarding integrated internship in preparation of staff nurse position, 33 to 72 percent of the students expressed ‘great extent’ and 27 to 58 percent ‘to some extent’ to the ten knowledge items. Among the knowledge items 72 percent students expressed the extent of preparation as ‘great extent’ to the actions of drugs.

**Attitude aspect:** With regard to the perception of students regarding integrated internship in preparation of staff nurse position 62 to 85 percent of the students expressed ‘to great extent’ and 13 to 49 percent ‘to some extent’ to the five attitude items. 85 percent and 76 percent of the students expressed that internship had prepared them ‘to a great extent’ for the attitude items “I could make a difference” and “I contribute to my profession” respectively.

**Skill aspect:** As for perception of students regarding integrated internship in preparation of staff nurse position 31 to 82 percent of the students expressed ‘to great extent’ and 16 to 76 percent ‘to some extent’ to the 15 skill items; 83 percent and 76 percent of the students stated that internship had prepared them ‘to a great extent’ ‘to perform basic nursing procedures’ and ‘to hand over and take over’ respectively.

Majority of the students (n=41, 91%), 42 (93%) and 42 (93%) perceived the level of preparation as ‘to a great extent’ in knowledge, attitude and skill respectively (Fig. 1). None of them perceived the level of preparation as ‘not at all’.

Majority of the students (n=43, 96%) perceived that integrated internship has prepared them for staff nurse position ‘to a great extent’ (Fig. 1). None of them perceived ‘not at all’.

There was a significant correlation between the two aspects, knowledge and skill. The obtained r-value
(U.b) was significant at 0.05 level. There was no correlation between the other two aspects: knowledge and attitude, attitude and skill.

The students’ perception with regard to integrated internship for the two aspects, knowledge and skill had a significant relationship in the preparation to staff nurse position.

Conclusion

In the wake of revised nursing syllabus with internship, students developed practical skills and positive attitude towards nursing. Internship has prepared them significantly in communication, handling over and taking over of charge which are very vital in nursing profession. Many students expressed that in the internship postings they developed confidence in providing care to the patients and could manage the ward alone.

References

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