

Continuing Nursing Education

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Adult education in Greece appeared during the 20th century and its evolution to date is related to social, financial, technological and cultural occasions.

Aim: The purpose of this review is to delve into the positive impact on nurses and, in particular, on active working nurses by monitoring their continuing education programs or by monitoring lifelong learning programs.

Materials & Methods: It was conducted a review of Greek and international scientific studies, focusing on views about continuing nursing education and lifelong learning. The material of the study consists of articles on the topic found in Greek and international databases such as: Google Scholar, Mednet, Pubmed, Medline and the Association of Hellenic Academic Libraries (HEAL-Link).

Results: The term "Continuing Nursing Education" describes lifelong learning programs exclusively for nursing professionals while they aim at providing a trained workforce with education in innovative and specialized practices to provide better health services to both patients and the wider population.

Conclusion: Continuing nursing education includes planned learning experiences that improve nursing behavior, skills and knowledge, and therefore, it promotes the functioning and nurses' care plan in society.

Keywords

Nurses, Lifelong learning, Continuing nursing education.

Introduction

Adult education in Greece appeared during the 20th century and its evolution to date is related to social, financial, technological and cultural occasions.

Simultaneously, the design, consolidation and reform of adult education importance and objectives are related to the ideological and socio-political problem that exists not only in the Greek but also in the international educational community regarding the role of adult education [1].

Internationally, continued nursing education has begun to flourish in nursing science since 1950. At that time, sporadic information

and post-training seminars and programs were offered to nurses in public hospitals. The decade 1980-1990 was the first decade in which the appropriate bases were formed for professionals in the nursing sector. They were mainly active practitioners while certificates of attendance were offered to them so as to improve their professional progress [1].

In Greece, continuing nursing education in the same period and especially since the late 1980s and early 1990s has been introduced and is constantly becoming a subject of interest to graduates of Greek nursing schools as well as to other health professionals. Nowadays, it gathers the most participation in the field of continuing education [2].

Lifelong learning programs and training processes that a person experiences during his life are mainly based on the individual's need

to improve and increase his knowledge, skills and competencies imposed by the personal, cultural and social context in which he belongs and their ultimate aim is his successful professional perspective. The European Union pays serious attention to the aforementioned training programs and publishes regular guidelines for the development of programs in its Member States [3].

Global and domestic educational reformers conclude that learning is lifelong and changeable by various tactics and means based on the principle that learning is a continuous process that remains incomplete after completion of study in a particular educational system, [4].

An educational way of continuous learning is lifelong learning, the purpose of which is to increase knowledge of people involved in it and transfer or acquire skills professionally, and finally, redefine professionals in each industry on the basis of developments in technology and research. Lifelong learning programs take place primarily with personal presence and they are continually gaining ground over people of all ages and occupations [5].

Also, distance learning is implemented via e-learning courses of study. It provides knowledge whereas it requires defined competencies [6].

Personnel's training is applied to adults and the structure of these training programs is completely different from traditional education courses since adult learners need tailored courses of study and approaches that meet their professional and educational needs [7].

Globally, nurses spend about 20-40 hours per year, on average, on educational programs or activities, perhaps more than some developing countries. Nevertheless, nurses and health care institutions, or lifelong learning teachers, are satisfied with the results of education and the evolution of its results. [8].

The purpose of this review is to delve into the positive impact on nurses and, in particular, on active nurses by monitoring their continuing education programs or by monitoring lifelong learning programs.

Methodology

It was conducted a review of Greek and international scientific studies, focusing on views about continuing nursing education and lifelong learning. The material of the study consists of articles on the topic found in Greek and international databases such as: Google Scholar, Mednet, Pubmed, Medline and the Association of Hellenic Academic Libraries (HEAL-Link). The key words used were nurses, lifelong learning, continuing nursing education. The criterion of article exclusion was the language, except for Greek and English. Articles and studies accessible to the authors were mainly used.

Continuing Nursing Education and Lifelong Learning

Continuing Vocational Education and training describes the type

of education addressed to professionals from various scientific sectors. It mostly provides specialized, scientifically-proven, innovative knowledge along with information to help these people gain a wider understanding of developments or even new fields of their occupation [9].

The term "Continuing Nursing Education" describes lifelong learning programs exclusively for nursing professionals while they aim at providing a trained workforce with education in innovative and specialized practices to provide better health services to both patients and the wider population [10].

The American Nursing Association defines continuing nursing education underlining that continuing nursing education is not dependent on sporadic and accidental educational actions but on targeted actions aimed at satisfying not only the needs of professionals but also their expectations [11].

Continuing Vocational Education and Training is a wide term that includes training activities that usually follow the completion of a more formal structured vocational training leading to a professional qualification. Continuing Vocational Education and Training programs are usually designed to maintain or increase relevant professional knowledge or technical skills. The scope of the Continuing Vocational Education and Training programs is generally more limited than that of continuing professional development, which also extends to wider organizational and interpersonal skills [12].

Lifelong learning and continuing education are essential elements of practice and provision for those working in a field that affects the health and well-being of the public. This is why continuing Nursing Education (SNE) is required as a part of the process of professional development and improvement of the health services offered. It extends beyond lectures (including conferences, seminars and workshops on skills, web-based information), participation in research projects and research teams, experiential education and active learning programs that encourage self-evaluation and / or performance improvement [13].

The designated framework for the upgrading and the new way of implementing the Lifelong Learning system in Greece is defined by Law 3879 passed in September 2010. The purpose of this law was to develop Lifelong Learning through alternative education processes, ensuring transparency, equality and quality in order to improve the chances for employment, professional and personal development and economic development [14].

According to Law 3879/2010, issues related to lifelong learning are addressed as well as the issues of the formal education system. Finally, the two systems are being harmonized [14]. This legislative framework gives particular attention to increase the knowledge, skills and skills of the workforce. It also establishes free access to education equally to all citizens, irrespective of its educational, socio-economic, cultural and cultural background, with particular emphasis on providing continuing educational services to those

most in need.

The main features of lifelong learning in accordance with the legislative framework that it is defined are:

- Lifelong learning is human-centered, active education while it can be continuous but it is not mandatory.
- It provides a holistic improvement to the trainee regarding his / her work skills and knowledge.
- It is easily adapted and it acts supportively to the development of a country. It also ensures the improvement of the human workforce and services [15].
- Finally, it supports the actions of social inclusion and equal opportunities [14].

The Value of Continuing Education for Professional Hospitals

In many countries, continuing vocational training so as current scientifically-based knowledge to be maintained to ensure adequate provision of modern quality health services is considered a fundamental ethical obligation for all employees in the nursing sector [16].

Human resources are considered as the most important contribution to healthcare. A key investment strategy is claimed to be continuing education and training of health professionals while the development of scientific data and the discovery of new tools, developments in clinical technology and practice are developing. Much of the research data is focused on appropriate educational approaches to ensure effective continuing nursing education [17].

The results of multi-year survey studies show that compulsory continuing nursing education is not a new research question. However, the issue of professionalism should be linked to continuing education and learning and it should be an obligation of all nurses [18].

Feldacker et al. argue that nurses, and especially those working in regional health care institutions, will face a decrease concerning their knowledge and skills, a more intense professional dissatisfaction, low morale, disappointment, lack of commitment and less interest in their work, due to reduced opportunities and chances to apply innovative techniques and learn newer therapeutic data, even periodically [19].

Most countries provide working nurses with continuing education programs in which they are able to take part in, because according to research results, in this way, there seems to be a positive impact on the provision of health care [19].

In most advanced countries, for example in Australia, each nurse must acquire a certain number of training and lifelong learning programs within a certain time to remain accredited and continue to work [19].

Most working nurses participate in lifelong learning programs, mostly due to personal desire. Landers et al. found in their study that health professionals who participated in continuing education

had decided to take part in continuing education programs as they wished to expand their clinical skills as well as they intended to acquire certifications of new techniques and treatment methods [20].

The results above were also confirmed by Gorczyca's findings, who argued that participants' motivation in continuing education programs was created by their desire to face a new academic and professional challenge. This has prompted them to meet a challenge that fulfills their personal need for learning and provides them with new professional developments [21].

In another study, Kovner et al. also found that graduate nurses working in non-urban centers were willing to upgrade their academic knowledge much more than those working in urban areas. It took place three to five years after completing their first degree. The main motivation reported by the participants in the research was their personal desire for success and job satisfaction [22].

Benefits of Nurses' Participation in Lifelong Learning Programs

Some of the benefits that may result from the participation of nurses in lifelong learning programs include the improvement of the quality of care provided to patients. Those nurses are constantly being empowered as they obtain certificates for expanding the role and they contribute to developing the nursing profession [23].

When nurses seek continuing education, there is an improvement in the quality of care provided to their patients. Rapley, Nathan & Davidson in their study about the way the acquisition of higher and upper academic qualifications (eg university, postgraduate, etc.) affects nursing professionals, concluded that for most active nurses, participation in continuing education programs widened their professional skills and improved the quality of nursing care they provided to their patients [24]. Similarly, Aiken et al. also found that healthcare facilities with highly qualified nurses show the lowest mortality rate for surgical patients [25].

Research evidence shows that a sufficient number of qualified staff who had undergone lifelong learning programs in the context of continuing nursing education has the effect of reducing the negative quality indicators of nursing care offered by the hospitals where they work. Indicators such as hospital infections, patient injuries, medication errors and mortality appear to be significantly reduced in hospitals where nurses, on average, have attended higher education or higher education programs and lifelong learning programs [26].

Nurses participating in continuing education programs contribute to the improvement and development of the nursing profession [27]. The Institute of Medicine underlines that as healthcare becomes multifaceted, nurses should have an advanced training that will allow them to meet the needs of people seeking healthcare for the future of Nursing. The report argues that further education will help nurses to develop their leadership skills and strengthen

their clinical skills [28].

The knowledge gained from these programs can stimulate nurses to reclaim and take higher-level positions in advanced clinical practice, research, leadership, administration and education nursing. Houston (2013) admits that there are emerging technologies such as genetic engineering, biometrics, electronic health records and ultra-sophisticated diagnostic and health care equipment that will change hospitalization practice. As a result, nurses should acquire skills for the development, acquisition and integration of these emerging technologies. [29]

Ghasemi-Emmzade, Vanaki and Memariyan proved that if the training sessions are tailored to the equipment and facilities of the sectors where the participants in continuing nursing education programs are working, they can promote the quality of patient care [30].

The nurses' will to participate in continuing nursing training programs is driven by a multifaceted model, defined by a combination of internal and external factors. The generalized personal attitude of each nurse towards continuing nursing education is influenced by various factors that are shaped by the existence of incentives; they direct the attempts and efforts to achieve the desired goals with a wide range of willingness and vigor [31].

One of the fundamental requirements for participation in continuing nursing education programs is the awareness of the individual responsibility of nurses for the best possible occupational performance of the nursing profession as defined by the Nursing Code of Practice [32]. It is essential the nurse have the necessary and required sources of education available in order to satisfy those needs.

Conclusion

Continuing nursing education includes planned learning experiences that improve nursing behavior, skills and knowledge, and therefore, it promotes the functioning and nurses' care plan in society [33]. Seminars, workshops and conferences provide an opportunity for continuous professional development and empowerment [34].

The knowledge and skills of nurses should be constantly updated. Given that the core of nursing activities focuses on people, investment in continuing education is vital to the nurses' ability within organizations [35].

The American Medical Institute reported that competent and educated nurses should be trained to secure and defend the future of the nursing profession. Obviously, skilled nurses promote the quality of services offered. Thus, it is important the obstacles and challenges of nursing education be clarified [36].

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