

Exploring the impact that the identification with the patient's symptoms has on Nursing Students' quality of life



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INTRODUCTION: Nursing students during their practice placement education are often influenced by the incidences they participate in caring for. This can in cases go beyond empathising with patient needs to the point that students exhibit similar symptoms with those of the patients' and may believe that they themselves suffer from the same illness as their patients.

AIM: The aim of the study was to investigate the effect that the empathising process with the patient has on nursing students and the impact this has on students' quality of life.

METHOD: Quantitative random sampling method was used. A total of 200 3rd and 4th year nursing students at the Higher Educational Institute of the TEI of Epirus, Greece during 2016 took part. Questionnaire on identifications and the SF-36 quality of life scale were used. Descriptive and inferential statistics analysis was performed.

RESULTS: The great majority of student participants were identified to empathise with patients to the point that themselves exhibited patients' symptoms or even false perception that they suffered the same conditions as the patients they cared for. Students who stated that they were identified with the patients had a worse quality of life in subscales of bodily pain, physical limitations, general health, mental health, physical role and social functioning than those who were identified a little or not at all with them, with a statistically significant difference.

DISCUSSION: Students' direct contact with real life patient in the practice placement often leads students to a false perception of illness which is correlated to student mental distress and consequently negatively impacts on the students sense of well-being and quality of life with manifestations of bodily pain, physical and mental ill-being and delimitations of social functioning capacities.

CONCLUSION: The above state impacts on student well-being and quality of life, and unavoidably affects their learning potential and perceptions about the nursing profession. Finally, supportive mechanisms such as debriefing after significant incidences in practice placement and reflective sessions at the end of each week can function as supportive mechanisms in maintaining student well-being, increasing levels of learning and creating as sense of satisfaction for being part of the nursing professions.

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	Frequency (N=200)	Percentage (%)	Statistical Differences
Sex:			
Men	35	17.5	
Women	165	82.5	
Marital Status:			
Unmarried	110	55.0	
Married	14	7.0	Fisher's Exact Test=11.261 P=.006
Divorced	2	1.0	
In relation	74	37.0	
Place of residence			
Village - Small Town	110	55.0	
City <150,000 inhabitants	57	28.5	Fisher's Exact Test=1.762 p=.430
City >150,000 inhabitants	33	16.5	

	Students without identification		Students with identification		p
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Somatization	6,61	6,09	9,19	7,41	.009
Obsessive-Compulsive	9,67	5,60	13,06	5,89	.000
Interpersonal sensitivity	8,38	5,46	10,43	6,14	.017
Depression	9,92	7,21	13,25	7,51	.003
Anxiety	5,55	5,71	7,93	6,75	.010
Hostility	4,54	4,56	5,60	4,29	.112
Phobic anxiety	2,30	2,58	3,68	4,14	.004
Paranoid ideation	6,36	4,17	7,82	4,79	.026
Psychoticism	5,94	4,04	7,81	5,42	.006

	Students without identification		Students with identification		p
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Physical Functioning (PF)	85,19	20,56	81,47	22,09	.239
Physical Role Functioning (RP)	78,98	27,94	68,75	34,66	.025
Emotional Role Functioning (RE)	76,84	30,07	62,75	36,66	.004
Vitality (VT)	55,53	12,86	53,97	15,25	.447
Mental Health (MH)	67,91	16,99	58,53	18,03	<.001
Social Role Functioning (SF)	74,53	20,92	66,91	20,23	.015
Bodily Pain (BP)	81,34	19,23	71,69	24,72	.003
General Health Perceptions (GH)	65,50	13,22	61,15	15,30	.038
SF_PCS	311,01	57,09	283,06	67,23	.002
SF_MCS	274,23	55,40	242,16	60,77	<.001

