

THE IMPACT ON NURSE ASSESSORS OF CONDUCTING ASSESSMENTS ON NURSES IN CLINICAL NURSING SETTINGS

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RCN Research Conference 2018

Birmingham



WITS
UNIVERSITY

Department of Nursing Education

"Advancing professional excellence through scholarship"



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Background

- Nursing students are subjected to a range of assessments which include assessments in clinical areas. Academic and career progression often depends on the outcomes of such assessments.
- The nurse assessor has a great responsibility related to determining competence, however, assessment is not an exact science.



Background

- Assessors have limited control over the development of the assessment tools and yet assessors are held accountable for assessment outcomes.
- Without an understanding of these challenges, it will be difficult to develop support systems to assist assessors.



Definition Of Competence

Competence is a cluster of abilities, the possession of which is inferred from observed performance, at an accepted level, resulting from an integration of knowledge , skills, ability, and judgements appropriate to a specific situation.



Research Design

Qualitative exploratory study using storytelling methodology (narrative research) according to the 1st four steps of Smith and Liehr (2005).

- 1. Gather the story**
- 2. Compose the reconstructed story**
- 3. Connect existing literature to the identified challenge**
- 4. Name the challenge**



Data Collection

- Sixteen nurse educators asked to share a story of an experience they had when assessing a nurse in a clinical area.
- Recorded and transcribed verbatim
- Follow up interview held to confirm meaning and content
- Thematic content analysis



RESULTS: THEMES & CATEGORIES

THEMES	CATEGORIES
THE ASSESSOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge• Experience• Values
THE STUDENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal circumstances• Response
THE SYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The tools• The processes



THE ASSESSOR - Knowledge

- Assessors have the *theoretical knowledge*, but not necessarily the skills to conduct assessments and are not always adequately prepared for the assessment (orientation to tool & personal preparation)

“ With the first few students I was in a position where I was sometimes not sure what to give them because I myself was not 100% sure as to what exactly was expected”



THE ASSESSOR - Experience

- It takes time to gain sufficient experience to assess well, and even then one is always learning and gaining new perspectives.

“Assessors should be mature enough and should be developed professionally enough and even emotionally mature (enough) to know what to do and how to separate things”



THE ASSESSOR - Values

- Caring is a core value in nursing, but in caring for the student, perceptions of the performance are influenced and distorted.

“Variety of reasons why students don’t perform. ... maybe they had a bad night last night, maybe the child was..., so there’s many reasons for them”.



THE STUDENT - Personal circumstances

- The personal circumstances of the student affected the way in which the assessor carried out the assessment and viewed the student's performance.
- Personal circumstances included
 - Previous educational experiences;
 - Financial situation;
 - Previous assessment experiences; and
 - Positive and negative bias.



THE STUDENT - Responses

- Students differ in the way they respond to assessment which also impacts on the assessor. These responses may relate to:
 - the way students play the system and also to
 - their individual responses to the assessment situation.



Playing the system: “It is a staged performance”. “They know how to play the system.” “As we started with the case she all of a sudden felt a little bit faint”

Individual responses “Some students will come into an assessment not being prepared”
“Some students blame the assessors for their own mistakes if found not competent”



THE SYSTEM - the tools

- The assessment tools used by the assessors caused them frustration partly because of the nature of the tools and partly due to their poor understanding of the tools.
- “not all the educators or the people that are doing their assessment are having the same understanding of the tool,”
- “ some assessors think they know more or even they expect more than the guidelines given for this level of student”
- “You never going to have a 100% tool to cover all the bases ”



THE SYSTEM - the processes

- Considerable dissatisfaction was expressed by participants relating to the way the assessments are done. In particular feedback (or the lack of) is a problem as is the lack of sensitivity shown to patients during students assessments.
- It was felt that the assessment system is flawed and competence is not being adequately assessed.



- “On the spot feedback...is very important. Giving them constructive feedback
- “I feel our problems maybe... not allowing us to groom our students to their level of confidence”
- “ Assessment should test what it is suppose to test”
- “You’re hurting my patient could you please stop”
- “I rather let them simulate.....”



Conclusion

- In the process of relating their stories, it was evident that assessments result in a great deal of conflict and anxiety.
- Not enough time is spent preparing assessors or debriefing them.



Conclusion

- Assessors are aware of the problems and have a personal will to make changes.
- They feel that a lack of resources and the educational system makes it difficult to do this.

