

A Course in Pediatric Emergency Nursing Improves Continuity of Nursing Practice

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Abstract

Objective: To evaluate the contribution of a course in pediatric emergency nursing (PEN) on participant's knowledge and practice.

Methods: Nurses from pediatric hospital departments with no experience in emergency medicine were trained and qualified in a comprehensive course in pediatric emergency nursing. The course emphasized principles of emergency nursing as well as methods to improve the continuity of in-hospital nursing care. All nurses who successfully completed the course started to work in the ED immediately after, but also continued to do shifts in their original ward. The course was evaluated six months later using questionnaires filled by these nurses.

Results: Sixty registered nurses from three pediatric departments were trained and qualified. The course included fifty hours of theoretical learning and forty hours of clinical practice. Nurse's questionnaires demonstrated improvement in knowledge, skills, and satisfaction at work. Eighty percent of nurses indicated that the course improved their ability to provide continuity in their nursing practice.

Conclusions: The PEN course contributed to the improvement of nursing practice in the ED and to the continuity of nursing care.

MeSH Words: Emergency Department (ED); Pediatric Emergency Nursing (PEN); Education

Introduction

The education of Israeli registered nurses in pediatric emergency nursing is less than optimal [1]. A survey published in this journal indicated that 36% of the nurses working in pediatric

emergency departments lack core education in pediatric general emergencies [1].

In 2002, following the establishment of a pediatric hospital in Haifa, Israel (Meyer Children's Hospital), the nursing administration

of the hospital decided to educate registered nurses working in the pediatric wards in pediatric emergency nursing. The rationale behind this initiative was to allow ward nurses to work in the pediatric ED as well.

A ninety hour theoretical and practical PEN course was created by the medical staff of the pediatric emergency department, and a group of registered nurses from the three pediatric wards attended the course. The objective of this study was to examine if the course contributed to the knowledge and the practice of its participants.

Methods

Sixty registered nurses from the pediatric departments were selected by the nursing administration. The course in PEN included fifty hours of theoretical learning and forty hours of clinical practice. The course emphasized principles of emergency nursing as well as aspects of continuing in-hospital nursing care of ED patients.

All nurses who successfully completed the course began working shifts in the ED immediately thereafter, alternating ED shifts with shifts in their "home" ward. The contribution of the course to its participants was evaluated by the nurses six months after completion of the course using structured questionnaires.

Results

The course was conducted during the months of December 2002, January and February 2003. Sixty registered nurses attended the course. Fifty-eight of them completed successfully the full training and were qualified to work in the ED.

Questionnaires were completed by all 60 nurses. Seventy percent of the nurses felt that the course presented a professional challenge. Most nurses indicated that it contributed to their professional knowledge (67%) and improved their communication skills (72%) (figure 1). The majority of nurses (80%) thought that the training they received during the course improved their capacity in maintaining a continuity of nursing care (figure 2).

Discussion

The importance of investing in knowledge nurses is imperative given the advancement and sophistication of many medical subspecialties [1-3]. In the US, registered nurses receive formal training in pediatric emergency by completing

the Emergency Nursing Pediatric Course (ENPC) [4]. The ENPC trains nurses to recognize and treat ill and injured children and to identify subtle changes in the less acute child. Additionally, the course teaches all aspects of pediatric emergency nursing, including pediatric trauma and resuscitation [4]. The course that we developed in Haifa teaches the basics of pediatric emergency nursing in a similar way, but is significantly longer and emphasizes aspects of clinical practice and continuity of in-hospital nursing care.

The objective of the current study was to evaluate the contribution of a new course in PEN. However, our study has some major limitations: First, the data is based solely on the reaction and the response of the nurses. Second, we didn't use any pre-course knowledge criteria to be compared with post-course knowledge criteria. Third, the group of nurses that was trained and qualified was selected by the hospital administration; these nurses were known as highly motivated professionals and therefore may not represent the hospital nurses as a whole. Fourth, the tool we used was a structured questionnaire originally planned to evaluate participant subjective impression. Fifth: The survey did not actually test for a change in the trainees knowledge or practice, but just their perception of one. Further research is necessary to assess impact on nursing practice and clinical outcomes.

Course participants worked only in the in-patient wards prior the course, but as of the completion of the course they began working routinely in the ED as well. Despite the obvious limitations of the study, it seems that the majority of nurses who participated in the PEN course expressed satisfaction from it, and indicated that it contributed to their professional knowledge. A major finding of our study is that it this course may contribute to the continuity of nursing practice from the ED to the admission ward.

Figure 1: Nurses' impressions regarding knowledge, patient- communication skills

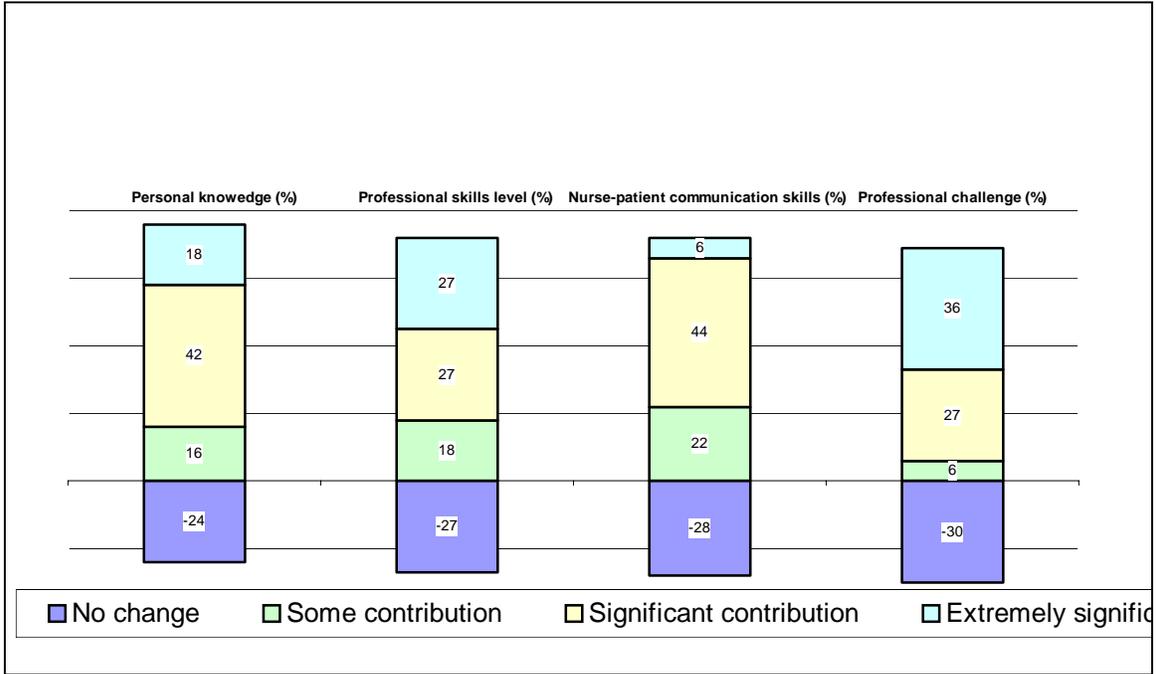
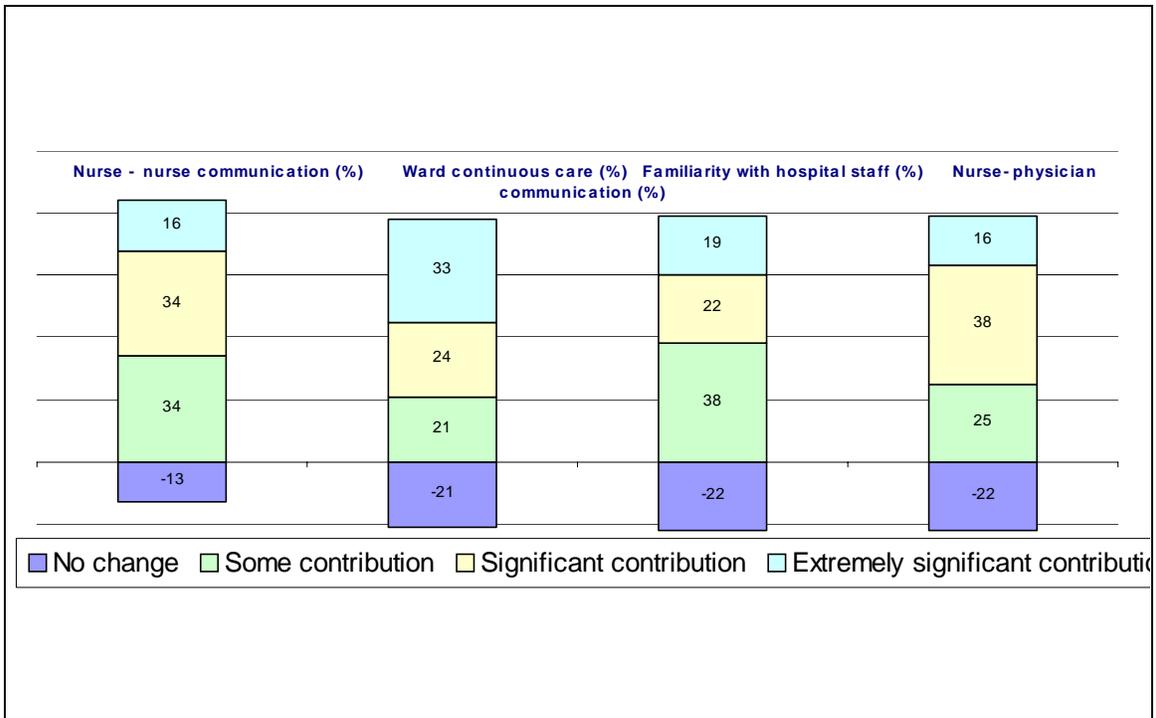


Figure 2: Nurses' impressions regarding nurse- nurse communication, familiarity



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