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Are Greek nurses expected to play an educational role?

Perceptions of nursing staff, medical doctors, health care students and patients about the nurses' educational role

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AIMS: To explore the perceptions of nursing staff, medical doctors, health care students and patients on whether nurses are expected to play an educational role in health issues, as well as to explore the factors that affect these perceptions. An additional aim is to evaluate the patient education offered by nurses. **METHODOLOGY:** The sample consists of nurses, nursing assistants, medical doctors, and patients from 4 hospitals of the Central Macedonia region of Greece, and of nursing students, nursing assistant students and medical students. The data were collected with the help of a questionnaire designed especially for this study. The patients did not complete the questionnaires by themselves; instead the questionnaires were completed by a researcher while interviewing them. **RESULTS:** The majority of the participants (80%, n=756) believe that nurses are expected to play an educational role. This belief was most common among patients (88.7%, n=181) and least common among medical doctors (60.3%, n=70). The factors that influence the perceptions about the nurses' educational role include: the perception about the profession, the perception about the work load (P=0.000), age (P= 0.002), work position (P= 0.000), post-graduate education (P= 0.002), and the level of undergraduate education of nurses and nursing assistants (P= 0.027). The appreciation of the patient education offered by nurses is significantly different among different groups (P=0.000). Nursing staff evaluates it more positively (56.4%, n=193) while the majority of patients evaluate it negatively (56.2%, n=118). The patients' evaluation is influenced by the severity of their health problem (P=0.038) and is associated with their attitude towards the entire nursing care (P=0.011). **CONCLUSIONS:** The present study revealed that even though there is a predominant perception that nurses are expected to play an educational role, the current patient education offered by nurses is evaluated positively only by nurses, nursing assistants, and nursing students.

KEY-WORDS: Nurse's role, educational role, patient education, Greek nurses