

The Operating Room Experiences of Nursing Students: A Focus Group Study

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Purpose: *The purpose of this study was to evaluate operating room (OR) experiences of student nurses.*

Design: *The focus group interview from qualitative research methods was used.*

Methods: *This study was carried out between February and March 2011 in an OR practice at a university school of nursing. The grounded theory method was used to collect and analyze semistructured interview. Interviews were held with a total of 26 students in three focus group interviews. Each interview was tape recorded and was supported by taking notes. The audiotapes were listened and relistened by the researchers and transcribed.*

Findings: *Four themes were determined as a result of this study. These are information, determination of career preference, period of internship and/or rotation, and fear and/or anxiety.*

Conclusions: *The students stated that the period of OR practice was insufficient, the opportunities for being able to implement were limited, they mostly observed, and they experienced feelings of being alone and fear in the OR. Despite all of these, the students stated that the OR practice provided a major contribution to their education and was effective in the determination of their career preferences after graduation.*

Keywords: *nursing student, nursing education, clinical practice, operating room, focus groups.*

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This study was presented as a oral paper at the 7th Surgical and Perioperative Nursing Congress between May 5 and 8, 2011, in Izmir, Turkey, and the article received first prize.

Conflict of interest: None to report.

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NURSING EDUCATION INCLUDES the theoretical knowledge and clinical practices designed to assist students gain skills required for the nursing profession. Clinical practice in nursing education provides putting theoretical knowledge into practice, gaining professional identity, and learning by practice.¹⁻⁵ The goal of nursing education is to equip nursing students with the knowledge and skills they need to practice safely and effectively.⁶ Clinical practice is a vital component of the nursing curriculum^{4,7} and has been acknowledged as being central to nursing education.⁷

Researchers have argued that the perioperative environment is an important area for educating nursing students.⁸ It is expected that student nurses participate in patient care at the surgical

clinics and operating rooms (ORs). The OR experience provides the opportunity of implementing theoretical knowledge about the subjects of patient care, such as aseptic techniques, skin preparation, patient positioning, infection control, informed consent, and balance of heat and liquids.⁹

Nursing curriculum should be directed toward improvement of clinical competencies of nursing students.^{7,10} Opinions of the lecturers, nurse managers, clinical nurses, and also student nurses have an important role in the achievement of successful curriculum planning.¹¹ According to the literature, researchers have suggested that positive perioperative clinical experience at the undergraduate level has a significant impact on perioperative recruitment.^{12,13} However, specific perioperative theoretical and clinical experience for most undergraduate degrees is limited. To develop positive, effective perioperative experiences for undergraduate students, their experiences need to be explored.^{8,12,13}

The researchers did not encounter any studies related to Turkish student nurses' opinions about OR practices. The aim of this study was to determine the experiences and opinions of nursing students about OR practice. The purpose of this study was to evaluate OR experiences of student nurses.

Methods

A qualitative approach using the grounded theory method was used to collect and analyze semistructured interviews. Interviews were held with a total of 26 students in three focus groups.¹⁴ With focus groups, self disclosure is emphasized to assist participants as a collective to explore and clarify perspectives on a subject with which they are familiar, that may not be possible using other approaches.¹⁴ The objective of this qualitative study was to evaluate OR experiences of student nurses.

The population of the study was composed of the 4th year intern students participating in an OR practice at a nursing school. The students underwent their OR practice in one of the orthopaedics, urology, or general surgery ORs in a university hospital. This hospital has no preoperative holding area. The patients are admitted to the ward before surgery for preoperative preparations. Then, they are sent to the OR. There are no post anesthesia

care units in this hospital which is why the patients are monitored in intensive care units until their physiological statuses are stable after surgery. Then, patients are sent to wards from the intensive care units. The students do their internship practices 3 weeks in ward units, a week in the OR, and a week in intensive care units. A faculty member, staff member, and a clinical nurse are responsible for the training of the students during the practices. Convenience sampling was applied as the sampling method. In light of the sampling method determined, groups were formed that included students who voluntarily accepted to participate in the study and who were in internships at different ORs within the scope of the surgical diseases nursing course at a nursing school.

Ethical Considerations

Written permission to conduct the research was obtained from the ethics committee of the nursing school as well as from the nursing school directorate where the study was carried out. The purpose and methodological details of the study were explained to the student nurses, and written consent was provided by all participants.

Data Collection

The data in this study were collected between February and March 2011 after students completed the surgical diseases nursing internship. The interviews were conducted in a private area. The researchers were not in charge of students during data collection to avoid bias.

The data were collected by using the semistructured interview form developed by the researchers. The students were asked the following questions:

1. What did you see in the OR?
2. If I had been with you in the OR what would I have seen you doing?
3. What do you think about the contribution to your education from the aspect of activity and productivity of the OR practices?
4. What did you feel during the OR practices?

A natural interview environment was formed under the guidance of the open-ended questions stated previously. The interviews were recorded by taking notes and using a tape recorder. One of the researchers conducted the interviews,

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