



Self-management support by final year nursing students: A correlational study of performance and person-related associated factors



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ABSTRACT

Background: Chronic conditions put a heavy burden on healthcare in every country. Supporting persons with a chronic illness to take an active role in the management of their condition is a core component in the Chronic Care Model. It implies confidence and good skills from professionals. To date, there is no evidence on final year nursing students' performance in supporting patients' self-management, nor on factors associated with this performance.

Objectives: To explore self-reported performance of supporting patients' self-management by final year nursing students, and person-related factors associated with this performance.

Design: A correlational multi-centre study of final year nursing students (N = 256) from eight nursing schools. **Methods:** Students were recruited from a convenience sample of eight nursing schools. All final year students were invited to participate. Data were collected between January 2015 and May 2016 using self-administered validated questionnaires. Theoretical behavioural frameworks were used to select hypothesized associated factors for self-management support: self-efficacy to perform self-management support and socio-structural factors (Social Cognitive Theory); needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, and patient-invested contingent self-esteem (Self-Determination Theory); and attitudes towards supporting patients' self-management (Theory of Planned Behaviour).

Results: Final year nursing students (N = 256) reported an overall low level of performance in delivering self-management support during internship. Students lacked mainly competencies in collaborative goal setting and shared decision making. Students reported a significant gap between their confidence and their actual performance in self-management support ($p < 0.001$). About 33% of the variance in students' performance is predicted by four person-related factors, i.e. self-efficacy to perform self-management support, general feeling of competency on internship, belief on patients' knowledge about condition management, and contingency of a student's professional self-esteem upon patients' achievements.

Conclusion: Final year nursing students are actually not ready to support patients' self-management even though they will soon be in practice as qualified nurses. Nursing curricula should be further attuned to the complex competencies of self-management support. Special attention is needed to broaden the perspective on self-management support. Learning opportunities can be introduced in classroom activities and on internship.

What is already known about the topic?

- Nurses are expected to support patients to take the lead in self-managing their chronic condition.
- Nursing students, who represent the future nursing workforce, require confidence and good skills in supporting patients living with a chronic illness to self-manage their condition.
- To date there is no evidence on the performance of nursing students

in supporting patients' self-management, nor on person-related factors influencing their performance.

What this paper adds

- Graduating nurses do not possess the full set of skills needed to support patients' self-management.
- This study demonstrated gaps in collaborative goal setting, shared

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decision making and the organisation of follow-up care.

- A broad view on self-management support, including support for medical, role, and emotional management, needs to be established within nurses' educational programme.
- Factors associated with students' performance in supporting patients' self-management are their self-efficacy, students' general feeling of competency on internship, belief on patients' knowledge of condition management, and contingency of a student's professional self-esteem upon patients' achievements.

1. Introduction

Chronic conditions account for more than half of the global disease burden (WHO, 2016). In recent years, chronic condition management has shifted towards a paradigm of active participation and involvement of patients in their treatment, named self-management. Self-management refers to a person's ability to manage the consequences of living with their chronic condition (Barlow et al., 2002) and includes the medical management, role management, and emotional management of their condition (Lorig and Holman, 2003). Persons living with a chronic condition are expected to have skills in problem solving, decision making, resource utilization, forming a partnership with healthcare providers, action planning and self-tailoring (Lorig and Holman, 2003). Nurses are expected to support patients to take the lead in self-managing their chronic condition as there is evidence on beneficial effects of self-management support interventions on multiple outcomes, such as clinical outcomes and readmission rates (Desborough et al., 2017; Panagioti et al., 2014; Trappenburg et al., 2013; Van Hoof et al., 2017). This expands the role of nurses from delivering information and traditional patient education to improve patients' confidence in managing their condition and patients' health-related choices, and to help patients to take the responsibility for their own care (Bodenheimer et al., 2002; Coleman and Newton, 2005). Self-management support requires well-prepared nurses with a spectrum of competencies (Alleyn et al., 2011; Elissen et al., 2013; Van Hoof et al., 2015).

Nursing students, who represent the future nursing workforce, require confidence and good skills in supporting persons living with a chronic illness to self-manage their condition. However, sparse evidence points out that nursing students lack knowledge, skills and confidence in patient education (Chisholm et al., 2012; Keyworth et al., 2013). To date, to the best of our knowledge, there is no evidence on the performance of nursing students in providing the comprehensive set of self-management support activities as described in the five A's model. The five A's model reports on five key activities in the process of self-management support (Glasgow et al., 2003): Assess, Advice, Agree, Assist, and Arrange. In the Assess phase, professionals explore patients' beliefs about living with the chronic condition and patients' motivation for managing their condition. In the Advise phase, tailored information is provided, which is a precondition for informed decision making. In the Agree phase, collaborative goals are set. In the Assist phase, patients are enabled to adapt their daily activities to the demands of the chronic condition. During the Arrange phase, follow-up care is organized. A partnership attitude is needed in each phase of the support process (Van Hoof et al., 2015).

In addition, evidence on factors influencing nursing students' performance in supporting patients' self-management is lacking. Performance in self-management support can be influenced by contextual (external) and personal (internal) factors (Lawn and Schoo, 2010; Thorne et al., 2000; Van Hoof et al., 2016). In this study, we focused on person-related factors associated with nursing students' performance in self-management support. Theoretical behavioural frameworks were used to select the hypothesized person-related factors. First, the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2004) recognizes self-efficacy as an important precursor of behaviour. Self-efficacy refers to the belief one has in his or her own capacity to successfully accomplish specific future tasks (Bandura, 2004). In addition, the impact of socio-

structural factors as integrated in the theory of Bandura (2004) on performance in self-management support were considered. In this study, we considered available time, support by the internship ward's team and by the school team to perform self-management support, perceived knowledge on self-management support, and the priority they could give to self-management support during internship. Second, the Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000) identifies three basic psychological needs as predictors of individuals' optimal functioning (in various life domains). The fulfilment of the needs for autonomy (i.e. experiencing a sense of volition and psychological freedom), competence (i.e. feeling effective), and relatedness (i.e. feeling loved and cared for) leads to optimal functioning and well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2008; Vansteenkiste and Ryan, 2013). The fulfilment of employees' basic psychological needs in the working environment leads to well-being and better performances (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). We explored if the fulfilment of students' basic needs during their internship might lead to more engagement in performing self-management support. Another precursor for behaviour, derived from the Self-Determination Theory, is contingent self-esteem. Contingent self-esteem involves the tendency to hinge one's self-esteem upon the achievements of others, i.e. one's self-esteem is contingent (Crocker and Wolfe, 2001; Wuyts et al., 2015). Patient-invested contingent self-esteem refers to the extent to which one's professional self-esteem is dependent upon patients' achievements, as well as on patients' successes or failures in chronic condition management. We explored if students whose professional self-esteem is contingent upon patients' achievements are more favourable to support patients' self-management. Third, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) recognizes that persons holding a positive attitude towards a behaviour are more favourable to perform that behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010). Attitudes refer to a person's evaluation of the behaviour as more positive or negative. In this study, we explored how important nursing students considered self-management support. In addition, we considered nursing students' beliefs on patients' motivation and knowledge to self-manage their condition, beliefs on patients' capabilities to make choices, and beliefs on patients' need for support to self-manage their condition. Analysing nursing students' performance in supporting patients' self-management and person-related factors influencing this performance, can inform nursing curricula and internship objectives.

2. Aim

To explore self-reported performance of supporting patients' self-management by final year nursing students, and person-related factors associated with this performance.

3. Methods

3.1. Study design

A correlational multi-centre study of final year nursing students was conducted.

3.2. Sample

Students were recruited from a convenience sample of eight Flemish nursing schools, five offering an undergraduate and three a vocational level three years-programme. Final year students were invited, prior to their final internship, to participate.

In Flanders (Belgium), a three-year programme in nursing is offered by an educational institute. Internship is an essential part of nursing education and enables students to develop their competencies in an authentic care environment. According to the European Union Standards (WHO, 2009), nursing students have internships representing at least one half of their total programme and these in different settings, i.e. mental health, geriatric, surgical, medical, paediatric, mother &

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