



Effectiveness of an Education Program on Donation and Transplant Aimed at Students of the Nursing Degree Course

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ABSTRACT

Background. Health workers' awareness and knowledge of transplant medicine can improve people's sensitivity and reduce their degree of opposition to donations. The medical literature contains numerous examples of education programs aimed at university students. This work describes the experience of an education program for students of the second and third year of a nursing degree course.

Methods. From April to September 2013, an education program was set up for 80 university students. It was divided into 3 stages: group self-learning based on prearranged topics, sharing of the results, and participation in the final seminar. The effectiveness was assessed according to a pretest/posttest design.

Results. The first questionnaire contained 19 questions, and the second contained 27. The questions were subdivided into specific areas: subjective knowledge, objective knowledge, attitude, awareness, participation in the event, evaluation of the information material handed out, and appreciation of the tools used. There was a significant increase for items relating to knowledge, whereas awareness and attitude (already high at the start of the program) showed no changes. After the program, many students discussed the question of donation with their relatives and friends, and about 70% filled in a donor card. The students expressed a highly positive opinion of the initiative and the tools used.

Conclusions. The initiative proved its validity, improving subjective and objective knowledge to a statistically significant extent and also increasing awareness and attitude. The students' evaluation was extremely positive.

TRANSPLANTATION is the only possible treatment in the case of terminal organ dysfunction. In Italy, the results in terms of effectiveness [1] and efficiency [2] are the outcome of consolidated experience in surgical techniques, immunomodifying strategies, and the organization of the National Transplant Network.

With regard to the international situation, the Global Observatory on Donation & Transplantation recorded (for 2012) 114,690 solid organ transplants. Despite a slight increase compared with 2011, this figure covers just 10% of the worldwide need [3]. In Italy, as of December 31, 2013, there were 8828 patients on the transplant waiting list; the number of transplants carried out in 2013 was 2841 [1]. The international literature recognizes the strategic role of health workers' education in relation to organ donation [4–9]. The aim of this study was to verify

the effectiveness of a donation/transplant education program for students of the second and third years of a nursing degree course.

METHODS

Design

A pretest/posttest design was chosen to assess the impact of an education program on knowledge, attitude, and awareness aimed at nursing students.

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Location

The study was conducted at the School of Nursing, Cottolengo Hospital (Little House of Divine Providence) in Turin, which is affiliated with Catholic University of The Sacred Heart (Faculty of Medicine and Surgery) in Rome, Italy.

Ethics

The education program and assessment tests were authorized by the university. The students' participation (on a voluntary basis) earned them 1 university course credit.

Participants

There were 80 students (52 from the second year and 28 from the third year) who took part in the project.

Questionnaire

The pretest contained 19 items categorized as 1 subjective knowledge item, 11 objective knowledge items, 4 attitude items, and 3 awareness items. The posttest contained the same questions as the pretest, plus another 11 questions designed to assess participation, the quality of the material handed out, and appreciation of the project.

The Education Program

The program was carried out from April to September 2013 in 3 stages: (1) self-learning of prearranged topics, (2) sharing of the results, and (3) a closing seminar.

Self-learning. The students were split into 9 groups. Between April and September they examined various aspects of transplant medicine: the history of transplant medicine and the types of transplant, the definition of "death" and the laws that define its verification/certification, the ways of expressing donation consent, the types of organ and tissue that can be donated, the types of donor and donation from a living person, the organizational evolution of the transplant system in Italy, the current Italian organizational model, and the relationship between religious creeds and transplant medicine.

Sharing. At the end of September, there was a meeting where each group was able to share its work with all the other students. Special attention was given to religions; part of the day, in fact, was given over to a round table with the ministers of the leading faiths. The closing seminar took place the day after the sharing stage, with the aim of discussing the most complicated aspects of transplantation. Sectoral professionals were invited to speak, along with some people with personal experience. The topics dealt with were brain death (emphasizing the differences between this, the coma, and the vegetative state), waiting lists and allocation criteria, the role played by the various professionals and their interaction, the path followed by a person on a transplant waiting list (emphasizing the nursing role), aspects linked to the death announcement and the donation request (handled by a psychologist with experience in this field), and, as a surprise conclusion, we let the families of some donors—and some transplant patients themselves—tell their own personal stories.

Data Collection and Analysis

The pretest was handed out during the first meeting, in April, while the posttest (which the students didn't know about in advance) was distributed at the end of October. IBM SPSS for Windows (Rel. 19, 2010) was used for data processing and analysis purposes. The data were compared with the χ^2 test or Fisher's exact test or the Monte Carlo Method, as appropriate. $P < .05$ was considered significant.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Data

Characteristic	Pretest	Posttest
Sex		
Female	67	56
Male	13	11
Age		
Average (SD)	24.18 (4.9)	24.89 (5.6)
Course year		
Second	52	45
Third	28	22

RESULTS

Eighty nursing degree students (about two-thirds from the second year and the others from the third year; [Table 1](#)) took part in our study. The average age was 24, with an SD of about 5 years. Four-fifths of the participants were female, one-fifth male. The pretest was filled in and returned by all 80 students, the posttest by 67.

We asked the students to judge their level of information with regards organ donation after death: 26% deemed their information level to be adequate in the pretest, and 92% in the posttest ($P < .001$). This evaluation by the students of their subjective knowledge highlighted the need for information concerning donations and transplants.

We then assessed whether the education program had really improved participants' objective knowledge ([Table 2](#)).

Table 2. Objective Knowledge

Question	Pretest (% Correct Answers)	Posttest (% Correct Answers)	<i>P</i> Value
Can a person with "brain death" recover?	77.6	98.5	<.001
An organ donor meeting brain death criteria	77.3	97	.001
Religions and donation	2.9	61.1	<.001
Do all patients who need an organ actually receive it sooner or later?	93.8	95	1
To receive an organ in Italy, is it necessary to pay or to "know someone"?	65.4	100	<.001
In Italy, can the relatives of the donor legally know the identity of the recipient?	56.3	94	<.001
What is xenotransplantation?	21.3	90.8	<.001
How many levels is the National Transplant Network divided into?	10.1	59.1	<.001
What is NHBD?	7.5	49.2	<.001
Which of the following laws reorganized the system of donations and transplants in Italy?	6.3	41.8	<.001
One year after the transplant, what is the work reintegration percentage of the transplant patient?	1.3	31.3	<.001

Abbreviation: NHBD, non-heart-beating donor.

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