



Effective teaching behaviors in the emergency department: A qualitative study with Millennial nursing students in Shanghai



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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Clinical education
Teaching behavior
Nursing education
Semi-structured interviews

ABSTRACT

Background: Millennial nursing students are different from generations before especially with the rapid development of China's economy, their varieties of characteristics affect the clinical teaching and learning. But how their learning preference impact their learning outcomes remain unclear.

Objectives: The aim of this study is to explore effective teaching methods in the emergency department from the perspective of Millennial nursing students in Shanghai, China. One of the main objectives is to provide valuable information to help nursing programs in China to effectively educate Millennial students to deliver patient-centered care and to meet medical changes according to Chinese healthcare reform.

Methods and Participants: Qualitative study design was used and semistructured interviews were conducted in a purposive sample of 16 nursing students from six colleges of nursing and five nursing high schools in Shanghai. They are from eight geographical areas across China and have a clinical practice in the teaching hospital. Colaizzi seven-step framework was applied for data analysis.

Results: Three themes were emerged including: demonstrating harmonious faculty-student relationship, possessing professional competence and being empathetic for teaching.

Conclusions: The findings of this study provide valuable information for promoting the clinical teaching quality in China. It is crucial to put more emphasis on demonstrating harmonious faculty-student relationship, rendering Millennial students more caring behavior, possessing sufficient competence in both knowledge and skills, and taking full advantage of technology in clinical teaching. The results of this study are relevant to envision the future training of clinical nursing teachers.

1. Introduction

Individuals born after the year of 1982 are commonly referred to as *Millennials* or *Generation Y* (Robb, 2013). Millennials make up slightly more than 19% of China's population, an estimated 248 million people (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2014), and range in age between 17 and 37 years. This new generation of young people are rapidly matriculating into undergraduate nursing programs in China (Henry and Gibson-Howell, 2011), yet nursing education programs are not quite prepared to deal with this generation of students. The purpose of this paper is to explore effective teaching methods in the emergency department (ED) from the perspective of Millennial nursing students and how that impacts teaching and learning. The focus on Millennial students is important for the following reasons. First, Millennial

students are different from generations before them. Their character is often described as optimistic, confident, assertive, creative, committed, pressured, and dependent (Johanson, 2012; Ng and Gossett, 2013). Research has shown that Millennial students are perfectionists, rule conscious, sensitive, and warm to others (Borges et al., 2010). Second, Millennials are the most educated generation in history and described as technologically savvy, often attached to a smart phone, PDAs, iPods, and iPads (Lourenco and Cronan, 2017). Lastly, this dynamic cohort of young adults grew up during an era where China's borders were opening up to the rest of the world and economic reforms were underway. Further, most Millennials in China are from the time of China's one child policy. This generation brings a set of different characteristics with the rapid development of China's economy and possessing better life conditions than their parents such as access to higher education.

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Many individuals in this generation were brought up by so-called “helicopter parents” who were born during China’s Cultural Revolution (1966–1979). These parents are highly involved in their children’s study to make up for the dreams they never achieved themselves (You et al., 2013). As a result, some Millennials hold specific social values (e.g., egotism, freedom) and learning perspectives (e.g., technology tendency, goal-oriented learning).

Shanghai is one of China’s greatest modern cities, attracting hundreds of thousands of students from all over China with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. By the end of 2016, Shanghai had a total of 13 public and private nursing colleges. Since the 1980s, three levels of nursing education (secondary diploma programs, advanced diploma programs and baccalaureate programs) were offered with the expansion of nursing colleges throughout the nation (You et al., 2015). The three-year secondary diploma programs recruit students aged 15–16 years old who have completed six years of primary school and three years of junior school education. Students who have completed three years senior education are recruited into the three-year advanced diploma programs. The four-year baccalaureate programs also recruit students who have completed the same 12 years general education also known as a diploma program (You et al., 2015). With the establishment of postgraduate nursing education programs at the masters’ and doctoral levels in the 1990s, China has experienced a rapid increase in the nursing workforce (Gao et al., 2012). In 2015, there were 223,917 graduated Millennial nursing students, and the total number of Millennial nursing students equaled 1,152,058 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2015). Furthermore, the implementation of China’s New Medical Reform launched in 2009 has brought on different medical care challenges and impacting clinical nursing education (Gao et al., 2012).

In many metropolises, as in Shanghai, overcrowding and lack of beds are becoming serious in the ED in a general hospital. Due to the high influx of urban populations and aging problems, the challenges of the ED in Shanghai cumulate to a severe extent. Thus, this dynamic environment presents a myriad of workplace challenges both in providing effective nursing care and nursing training and education. The overcrowded ED is often chaotic, ever-changing and filled with unpredictable situations and interruptions, such as major accidents, traumas and other types of life-threatening emergencies. In the Chinese healthcare system, the clinical teaching in the ED plays a significant role and has specific merit in nursing education. The practice-based skills and strategies obtained in a busy ED will help students better handle the abrupt emergency circumstances in their later practicum or professional career. An increasing body of evidence suggests that the teaching in the ED is a cornerstone of the clinical nursing teaching and does help in the acquisition and sustainability of first-aid skills (Jonson et al., 2017).

The landscape of nursing education in China has changed dramatically in the past two decades, resulting in a transformation of how nursing teachers educate new students in the ED (Revell and McCurry, 2010). Clinical teaching is a key component of nursing education and help students link theoretical knowledge and professional practice so as to increase their clinical competency. In addition, the nursing pedagogy in the ED helps students gain the ability to conquer a variety of challenging situations that may arise in their future nursing career. Clinical nursing teachers (also referred to as clinical preceptors) act as role models and promote nursing students’ development of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and competency for future professional role in nursing (Babenko-Mould et al., 2012). Clinical nursing teachers’ roles are described as taking responsibility for transferring professional knowledge, skills and experience to students, and leading students through clinical practice and persistently promoting their personal academic competence (Lovrić et al., 2014). The clinical teacher’s responsibility is recognized as crucial to provide students with opportunities for practical experience, to be active to respond to questions, to enhance self-confidence, to combine cognitive, behavioral and emotional skills (D’Souza

et al., 2013), to be supportive in problem solving, to encourage critical thinking and model values, professionalism, good attitude and ethical behaviors for students. In the fast-paced and intricate healthcare environment such as the ED, clinical teaching behavior plays an important role in learning outcomes, especially in terms of skills acquisition in order to provide better quality of care, and ensure patient safety.

The specific characteristics (e.g., self-respect, electronic communication and technology preferred) of Millennial students are challenging nurse educators to examine traditional nursing pedagogy as well as teaching methodology and delivery. Accordingly, distinguishing positive and effective teaching behavior of nurse educators is warranted in this complicated teaching-learning environment. Nowadays, student-centered education reform requires taking into account the perceptions of the students. Identifying and describing the preferred pedagogy of Millennial students should enable nurse educators to implement appropriate teaching methodology to educate qualified competent nurses in the future, producing positive educational outcomes (Robb, 2013).

The purpose of this article is to explore effective teaching methods in the ED from the perspective of Millennial nursing students. One of our main objectives is to provide information to help nursing programs in China to effectively educate Millennial students to deliver patient-centered care and to meet medical changes according to Chinese healthcare reform. Furthermore, we describe strategies based on Millennial students’ preferences for clinical nursing teachers to utilize to educate this new generation of students in order to become competent nurses.

2. Methods

2.1. Study Design

A qualitative study using phenomenological approach was selected to explore the perspectives and lived experiences of Millennial nursing students toward effective teaching behaviors (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). The primary interest was in the Millennial nursing students’ subjective perceptions, and the research approach was consistent with a phenomenological method (Raines, 2012). A purposeful sample of 16 nursing students from six colleges of nursing and five nursing high schools in Shanghai were recruited. Eligibility criteria for participation included: 1) enrollment in a college of nursing or nursing high school; 2) completion of at least 24 weeks of clinical practice; and 3) experience clinical practice in the ED. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews including one focus group interview comprised of seven participants and nine individual interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted between September and October 2015. Interview locations were chosen according to the preference and the convenience of the students so that they could talk confidentially. No students dropped out during the interview. Data were considered saturated by dense categories with no new data emerging (Raines, 2012). This criteria was achieved after 16 Millennial nursing students shared the perceptions. Data collection was terminated when the 16th students’ interview was finished as there was no new information emerged. Interview questions in Table 1 were

Table 1
Interview questions exploring nursing students’ perceptions of clinical nursing pedagogy.

No.	Question
1	What experience do you have during the practicum in the ED?
2	How do you evaluate the clinical teaching in the ED?
3	Which behaviors of the clinical nursing teachers will impact you?
4	Which kind of competency should the teachers have?
5	Are you satisfied with the teaching? Why?
6	What are the components of effective clinical teaching in your opinion?
7	Please describe the most impressive clinical nursing teachers in emergency department. Why impressive?
8	What suggestions do you have toward improving the teaching quality?

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