



Patients' involvement in nursing students' clinical education: A scoping review



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ABSTRACT

Background: Actual contacts with patients are crucial in developing the skills that students need when working with patients. Patients are accustomed to the presence of students. The concept of learning from patients has emerged recently, shifting the focus from learning from professionals as role models to the relationship between the student and patient.

Aim: With focus on patients' perspective in clinical practice placements, this scoping review aims to review and summarize the existing empirical literature regarding patients' involvement in nursing students' clinical education.

Design and method: A broad search without time limitations was performed in the databases CINAHL, Medline, PsycINFO and ERIC. A manual search was also performed. Only empirical studies describing aspects of patient involvement in nursing education from the patient's perspective were taken into account. Thirty-two studies published from 1985 to June 2016 met the selection criteria and were analysed using inductive content analysis.

Results: The perspective of real patients focused on their role in students' learning and assessment processes. In general, patients appreciated the opportunity to contribute to a student's learning process and thus enhance the quality of patient care. However, the patients' approaches varied from active to passive participants, comprising active participants contributing to students' learning, followers of care and advice, and learning platforms with whom students practiced their skills. Some patients perceived themselves as active participants who facilitated students' learning by sharing knowledge and experience about their own care and wellbeing as well as assessed students' performance by providing encouraging feedback.

Conclusion: The state and degrees of patient involvement in nursing students' clinical education were made explicit by the literature reviewed. However, the number of studies examining the involvement of real patients in students' education in clinical settings is very limited. To understand this untapped resource better and to promote its full realization, recommendations for nursing education and future research are made.

What is already known about the topic?

- Patient involvement in clinical education is essential for helping future professionals work in partnership with patients, delivering high-quality patient-centred care.
- Patients have valuable perspectives to enrich nursing students' clinical education, but their active involvement is still not well established in everyday clinical practice.
- A dialogue on patient involvement in clinical learning and assessment enables us to include and deepen our understanding of patients' needs, preferences and values and to address any gaps in the patient-centred approach in clinical education and practice.

What this paper adds

- Patient involvement in clinical nursing education can vary from active participants contributing to students' learning and followers of care and advice to learning platforms with whom students practice their skills.
- The determinants of patient involvement such as patients' views of themselves, students and the environment for caring and learning are related to their level of involvement.
- From the perspective of patients as well as students, the benefits, barriers and outcomes regarding the involvement of patients in clinical nursing education are still ambiguous.

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1. Introduction

Health care delivery founded on the principles of patient-centredness is widely held as one of the core aims of healthcare providers around the world. Socio-demographic and epidemiological challenges increase the pressure on health systems, and patient empowerment and patient-centred care are seen as key elements in responding to emerging and varied health challenges in ways that are efficient and of high quality. Hearing patients' voices and involving them to become partners in decisions about their own care are pivotal in delivering high-quality health services that are truly responsive to patients' individual needs and potentials. Equally, nursing education has to keep pace with the challenges that the patient-centred approach poses in order to guarantee that new graduates have the knowledge and skills they need in the rapidly evolving health care setting and the changing scope of clinical practice (OECD, 2017; Salminen et al., 2010; WHO, 2015). In the literature, the various terms used interchangeably with involvement include engagement, participation, collaboration and cooperation while the words user, service user, client, consumer, people with a certain condition, disease, disability and expert by experience often replace the term patient in relation to involvement in healthcare education (Scammell et al., 2016; Towle et al., 2010).

Patients provide the reality of practice for students. Encounters with patients help students integrate their academic learning to a real-life context and thus improve the quality of their clinical learning. Over the past 20 years, the active involvement of patients in education has expanded greatly: examples can now be found from basic training through postgraduate and continuing professional development. Patient involvement in education includes a wide spectrum of educational activities including student selection, a variety of teaching roles, feedback and assessment, curriculum development and decision-making at an institutional level. Most of the initiatives described come from medical education, but some come from nursing, social work or multi-professional education (Morgan and Jones, 2009; Repper and Breeze, 2007; Scammell et al., 2016; Tew et al., 2012; Towle et al., 2010; Wykurz and Kelly, 2002). These previous literature reviews highlight the diversity of patient involvement within education, but they do not address the perspective of the patients themselves as concerns their involvement in students' clinical learning and assessment processes. Even though some recent practices have changed this role so that patients share their expertise in a more active manner, their involvement in education is still not well established in the mainstream of educational practice and their knowledge and experience have been underutilized in clinical settings (Scammell et al., 2016; Towle et al., 2010).

Globally, patients and patient care have featured prominently in clinical learning, which thus includes various relationships and interactions between students, patients and healthcare professionals. However, the interactions and relationships between patients and students are mostly ones between parties from different worlds, different generations and different cultures, including the professional culture and the world of lived experience (WHO, 2015), and students' clinical learning always takes place under the supervision of preceptors and other professionals (European Commission, 2013; Sedgwick and Harris, 2012). This power imbalance is challenged by the attention on patients' views and experiences when patients are involved in students' learning, contributing collaboratively to clinical teaching. Patients usually provide a safe learning environment because the power imbalance in a patient–student relationship is reduced as compared to a preceptor–student relationship. In clinical settings, the role of patients as teachers is, however, almost always informal, and it is complicated by the fact that the patients' primary reason for being in the place of care is to expect and receive competent care; being involved in the education of students is secondary to that (Sedgwick and Harris, 2012). Hence, it is important to offer patients an informed choice to be involved so that they are clear about their role and rights and confidentiality aspects, what students are allowed to do, and how patient safety is always

guaranteed by the preceptors (Repper and Breeze, 2007).

Patients are increasingly involved in the development and evaluation of healthcare services and patient collaboration is thus essential in the current and future education of practitioners. In their capacity as experts of their own situation, patients provide an additional teaching resource in students' learning. They also feel that their experiential knowledge should be included in education and they mainly become involved for altruistic reasons (Morgan and Jones, 2009; Wykurz and Kelly, 2002). Relationships and actual contacts with patients as experts in their own illness and more insight into sharing the human experience of health care are seen as feasible, beneficial and pivotal in developing the skills that all health professionals, including nursing students, need when working with patients. This expertise is derived from patients' unique experience of health, illness, disability or the effects of the social determinants of health, and their perspective cannot be identified by other means (Morgan and Jones, 2009; WHO, 2015). Thus, the value of the opinions of patients should be appreciated in learning and in assessing students in relation to the perceptions of nursing care delivered by students as well as students' competencies, such as compassion and communication skills (Tew et al., 2012).

This review focuses on the rarely described perspective of patients in patients' involvement in the clinical education of nursing students. In this review, the widely used term 'patient' is used to encompass clinical encounters in which people with health problems are involved in nursing students' clinical learning and assessment processes. Patient involvement in clinical education refers to the ways in which patients collaborate and provide feedback, helping students as future nurses to learn to work in partnership with patients to deliver high-quality patient-centred health care.

2. Aims

The aim of this scoping review is to review and summarize the existing empirical literature regarding patients' involvement in nursing students' clinical education with a focus on patients' perspective in clinical practice placements. We started with the following research questions: *What is the degree of patient initiative in clinical education? What are the determinants of patient involvement in clinical education?* In particular, this paper seeks to identify the central issues of what is currently known about patient involvement in nursing students' learning and assessment processes during the clinical practicum and to make recommendations for nursing education and future research.

3. Methods

This scoping literature review investigates the breadth of research on a particular topic, in this case, generating an intellectual overview of what is known about the topic as concerns the role of patients in nursing students' learning and assessment processes during clinical practicum (Levac et al., 2010; Rumrill et al., 2010). An inductive content analysis was used to summarize and disseminate what is known about the topic.

3.1. Literature search

A systematic search without time limitations was conducted in August 2017 across the following electronic databases: MEDLINE, CINAHL, PsycINFO, and ERIC (Fig. 1). Searches were limited to English language studies and focused on peer-reviewed publications with an abstract available. In order to explore further, additional studies were identified by hand-searching the reference lists of the studies included in the review and those studies in ResearchGate which cited the studies included in this review.

Papers were included if they were empirical studies published in English and addressed any aspect of real patient, client or service user involvement in clinical education of nursing students in relation to

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