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Communication Barriers among Patients and Nursing Students from Two Selected State Universities During their Clinical Learning

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Background: Nursing undergraduates frequently communicate with patients during their clinical training. Communication may act as a barrier to reach the desired quality of their learning. Patient-related and student-related communication barriers pertaining to nursing undergraduates have to be identified and addressed for successful clinical learning.

Objective: To describe the perceived barriers for nursing undergraduates in two state universities to communicate with patients during their clinical learning

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using a convenient sample of 120 nursing undergraduates from 2nd, 3rd and 4th years at University of Sri Jayewardenepura and Eastern University of Sri Lanka. A previously validated self-administered questionnaire was adopted and pre-tested for this study. It contained nurse-related, patient-related and nursing students related barriers for communication. Data were analyzed using General Linear Model in SPSS version 23. Patient-related and student-related communication barriers were categorized as low, moderate and severe according to percentiles.

Results: A majority of participants were females (77.5%). Patient-related and nursing student-related barriers were perceived as moderate barriers by a majority of nursing students 72.5% and 66.6% respectively. Patient-related barriers had the highest overall mean (\pm SD) score (3.12 ± 0.64) compared to nursing student-related barriers (3.00 ± 0.67). The highest mean (\pm SD) scores were found for 'serious disease conditions of patients' (3.75 ± 1.03) and 'language differences' (3.34 ± 1.36) in the categories of patient-related and nursing student-related barriers respectively. Three out of 11 (27.27%) patient-related communication barriers and five out of 19 (26.32%) nursing student-related communication barriers were significantly associated with students' gender, academic year and their respective university.

Conclusions: Nursing students perceived both patient and student-related barriers to communicate moderately. Patient-related barriers were the highest. Hospital authority has to aware the patients regarding the importance of communication with nursing students. Nursing students should be trained on effective communication, interpersonal and language skills during their orientation and before attending clinical training.

Keywords: *Clinical learning, Communication barriers, Nursing student, Patient-related and nursing student-related barriers*