

## Editorial

### Nursing education: How far are we successful?

At a moment of achievement of publishing a scientific journal in nursing as a pioneering effort, it is imperative to look back and look forward to visualize/envisage where we stand 23 years after the initiation of tertiary education for nurses in Sri Lanka.

Writing for publication is essential to share new research evidence to keep nurses updated, and develop a scientific knowledge base of the profession yet it is a strenuous exercise, that's why nurses always have overlooked its need. However, the need to maintain scientific rigour in our work depends on careful consideration of what we impart to our students through the nursing curricula.

Firstly, we need to consider whether the essential ingredients to enable students to render safe and effective care have been incorporated into curricula in order to gain public trust and improve their self-image as professionals: for example, most nursing curricula lack essential ingredients of communication such as expressing assertively but without judgement, responding with empathy within their professional boundaries and most importantly expressing themselves through "writing".

Overloading of theory mostly disease oriented, through a system-based approach but giving less emphasis on humanistic and psychosocial aspects was the complaint traditionally made regarding undergraduate curricula. The quest for inquiry into what we are doing right now should come within the colleges and faculties, else the same saga/story will continue. However, the need for a framework for nursing education is a longstanding need, and it can be the answer to the question/issues regarding quality of education. Efforts exerted by late Miss. Kusum Vithana, former Director of Nursing (Medical Services) in year 2000 to develop standards in nursing and thereafter in the year 2013, during the time when late Miss. Swarna Amarasinghe was the Registrar of the SLNC were unsuccessful. Subsequently an initiative taken by the University Grants

Commission to develop a benchmark statement in 2014 did not reach to the level of its finalization. The newly elected board of members of the SLNC has the sanction to explore and take the most needed steps in accrediting the existing educational programs, to fulfil the need of a concrete framework to define the competencies possessed by a Sri Lankan nurse, whether it is a Diploma nurse or a Graduate nurse.

Budding professional nurses should develop skills in critical reflection and ethical decision making incorporated in person-centred care tailored to individual patients, and to eliminate stereotyped behaviours which can be taught within curricula. Resilience is to be an excellent skill to be practiced in any setting.

Skills mingled with attitudes which are favourable for compassionate care are in the program level outcomes, intermediate learning outcomes, which need to be imparted skilfully through role modelling or using tactful simulation exercises. The traditional teaching styles in the 70's had all these qualities above all sciences, technologies, what we are lacking is the coordination between head, hearts and then to hands. Automatic hands with non-caring attitudes can lead to frustration on the part of patients and nurses as well.

Even though new nursing graduates are undergoing a compulsory Orientation program of six months under the Ministry of Health, before they are appointed as Nursing Officers (Grade III), the effectiveness of the program is yet to be evaluated.

Students who were instructed to practice what they have learnt have to be supported by someone in the clinical setting. Teachers hope that the students will somehow learn the skills; there should be someone who would create opportunities to learn, guide the novice student to plan and implement care needed. The person who guides needs an impartial attitude towards the students who come from schools, and faculties, without discrimination as both

the students have to be incorporated to nursing culture, which they would be able to learn from the clinical setting, perhaps the artificial settings and simulated patients may not convey the essence of nursing; a profession always a trusted by patients. The importance of building with trust among patients and families, within nursing, and with fellow care givers has to be imparted from generation to generation, if one generation breaks this tradition, it will be disastrous to nursing professional identity.

Above all, be inculcating a research culture is an essential process in nursing curricula, which leads to utilizing their findings in to practice, education. The need for publishing has become a tradition of academic excellence, while those who are in practice have minimally taken action towards it. Nursing students undertake research as part of their curriculum requirements, but very few of them select “nursing” related research problems, which affect knowledge building particularly of nursing. Even today, it is not too late to get organized towards the success of nursing education and to inculcate a research culture.

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