

Nursing Education in Sri Lanka Challenges and Vision for the Future

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Abstract

Background

In Sri Lanka, pre-registration nursing education is moving from diploma level to a university bachelor degree in consistent with many countries around the world. In this transitional stage, understanding of the evolution and existing situation of nursing education in Sri Lanka provides perspective on the origins of current successes and dilemmas, and enables the development of strategies and plans for future trends in the profession.

Method

The literature search was conducted using MEDLINE and CINAHL and limited to articles in the English and Sinhala languages publication until 2014. Personal communication, unpublished reports and government records and web sites were used to obtain information on nursing education in Sri Lanka. The reference list of all identified reports and articles was searched for additional studies. Hand searching of relevant Sri Lankan journals and government reports was undertaken to reveal any additional literature.

Discussion

This review explores evolution and existing situation of nursing education and its impact on developing professionalism in nursing. Major challenges for the nursing profession in Sri Lanka are discussed with some recommendations, enabling the identification and development of an appropriate policy direction.

Keywords: *Nursing, Education,, Curriculum development, Evidence based practice, Sri Lanka*

I. INTRODUCTION

Health care is changing dramatically because of advances in medical sciences and technology, new discoveries in clinical research and the greater demands of consumers. For nursing, as a key profession in healthcare provision, these changes represent a significant challenge in terms of maintaining the quality of services and preparing nurses for the future [1]. The World Health Organization Global Advisory Group in 1992 recommended that, when appropriate, countries should move basic nursing education to university standards [2]. This view was supported by many countries around the world, moving from hospital-based apprenticeship training to university-based education, enabling the acquisition of bachelor degree

education as a minimum preparation for beginning professional nursing practice [3, 4]. It is evident that bachelor of nursing (baccalaureate-nursing) graduates acquire unique skills as clinicians and demonstrate an important role in the delivery of safe patient care [4, 5].

In Sri Lanka, pre-registration nursing education is currently based on a three-year diploma level nursing program in schools of nursing that are attached to the Ministry of Health and four-year bachelor programs in nursing at universities. The government policy is that nursing education should be based on the four-year undergraduate nursing program [6]. In response, the University Grant Commission of Sri Lanka has approved four-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing programs (BScN) in government universities. In addition to the proposed affiliation of existing schools of nursing to the university sector, several other universities including the Open University proposed to establish similar programs in the future [1]. Understanding of the evolution and existing situation of nursing education in Sri Lanka provides perspective on the origins of current successes and dilemmas, and enables the development of strategies and plans for future trends in the profession. This review explores trends and issues of nursing education in Sri Lanka and its impact on developing professionalism in nursing. Major challenges for the nursing profession in Sri Lanka are discussed with some recommendations, enabling the identification and development of an appropriate policy direction.

II. METHOD

The literature search was conducted using MEDLINE and CINAHL and limited to articles in the English and Sinhala languages publication until 2014. Personal communication, unpublished reports and government records and web sites were used to obtain information on nursing education in Sri Lanka. The reference list of all identified reports and articles was searched for additional studies. Hand searching of relevant Sri Lankan journals and government reports was undertaken to reveal any additional literature.

III. NURSING EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

Internationally, the major trend in nursing education is the move from hospital-based apprenticeship training to university-based education, enabling the acquisition of bachelor degree education as a minimum preparation for beginning professional nursing practice. The view that nursing education should be