

INCLUSION OF NURSING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES: AN EXPERIENCE REPORT

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study was to report actions carried out in the practice field of occupational health in the boarding school of the School of Nursing of the Rio de Janeiro State University. The experience was carried out from May to December 2015 and the participants were senior nursing students. Three practice groups were formed as follows: Participation in the unit's occupational health programs; Education in occupational health; Analysis of environmental risks at specific wards. In conclusion, the activities contributed to academic development, and were considered essential for the learning of basic skills in the respective field.

DESCRIPTORS: Nursing; Occupational Health; Education, Nursing, Diploma Programs; Occupational Health Nursing.

INSERÇÃO DE GRADUANDOS DE ENFERMAGEM EM SERVIÇOS DE SAÚDE DO TRABALHADOR: RELATO DE EXPERIÊNCIA

RESUMO: O objetivo desta pesquisa é relatar as ações realizadas no âmbito do campo prático da Saúde do Trabalhador no internato da Faculdade de Enfermagem da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. A experiência foi vivenciada entre os meses de maio e dezembro de 2015 e os alunos participantes são discentes de Enfermagem do último ano. Foram criados três grupos de práticas, a citar: Participação nos programas de saúde do trabalhador da unidade; Educação em saúde para os trabalhadores; Análise de riscos ambientais de enfermarias específicas. Conclui-se que as atividades contribuíram para o desenvolvimento acadêmico, configurando-se como essencial à apropriação das competências básicas da respectiva área.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Enfermagem; Saúde do trabalhador; Programas de graduação em enfermagem; Enfermagem do Trabalho.

INSERCIÓN DE ESTUDIANTES AVANZADOS DE ENFERMERÍA EN SERVICIOS DE SALUD LABORAL: RELATO DE EXPERIENCIA

RESUMEN: El objetivo de esta investigación es informar las acciones realizadas en el ámbito del campo práctico de la Salud Laboral en la pasantía de la Facultad de Enfermería de la Universidad del Estado de Rio de Janeiro. La experiencia fue realizada entre los meses de mayo y diciembre de 2015, los alumnos participantes eran estudiantes del último año de Enfermería. Fueron creados tres grupos de prácticas, a saber: Participación en programas de salud laboral de la unidad; Educación en salud para los trabajadores; Análisis de riesgos ambientales de enfermerías específicas. Se concluye en que las actividades contribuyeron al desarrollo académico, configurándose como esenciales para la apropiación de las competencias básicas del área en cuestión.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Enfermería; Salud Laboral; Programas de Graduación en Enfermería; Enfermería del Trabajo.

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● INTRODUCTION

Occupational health comprises a theoretical and practical field of the public health area, and has the association of the health-illness process with work as its main key. In the Brazilian Unified Health System context (SUS, as per its acronym in Portuguese), the National Worker's Health Policy⁽¹⁾ establishes guidelines and strategies for comprehensive care in all aspects and levels of the Brazilian Health Care Network (RAS, as per its acronym in Portuguese), highlighting surveillance, based on promotion and protection, and reduction of morbidity and mortality. It considers the diverse aspects of occupational health actions and work, one of the key factors of the health-illness process, as well as protection and prevention of accidents and grievances in the work environment.

Occupational health nursing came up in Europe at the end of the 19th century with the industrial revolution, and was consolidated in Brazil in the late 1970s. The presence of nurses in occupational health teams established their practices in the work environment, in order to prevent illnesses, maintain productivity, and contribute to the reduction of costs with workers for companies⁽²⁾. Nowadays, nursing defines its importance in the area, acting, by means of multidisciplinary teams, in still unconventional scenarios in which, through hygiene services, medicine, and occupational health, it influences the health profile of worker assisted⁽³⁻⁴⁾.

In accordance with a proposal of integrated curriculum that presents students the experience of nurses in different areas, including that of the promotion of occupational health - and consequent prevention of grievances - in the hospital environment, the School of Nursing of the Rio de Janeiro State University (FACENF-UERJ) includes its senior students in this context. The nursing internship is made up of practice experiences during two semesters, in which students can continuously improve their care, management, educational, and critical thinking practices, providing knowledge and practice in several nursing areas⁽⁵⁾.

Specifically in occupational health, students are included in the occupational health service of a teaching hospital, which help them so that they can participate in the work routine of the nurse in charge, act in health programs already developed in the institution, and detect new demands for future interventions.

In this context, the aim of the present study was to report actions carried out by nursing interns of the School of Nursing of the Rio de Janeiro State University, under educational supervision, in the practice field of occupational health.

● METHOD

The reported experience occurred in the nursing internship, during occupational health activities. It is worth mentioning that this practice scenario is carried out in the eight undergraduate program terms, in a teaching state hospital of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

The mean length of stay is 24 hours of activities per group of five students. The actions are previously planned with the occupational nurse of the abovementioned hospital. The practice of activities occurs under educational supervision.

Workshops for evaluation of the field were carried out at the end of the practice period of each group of students. These workshops consisted of a discussion time between students and professor for detailed analysis of the actions carried out. The workshops were also basis for closing grades. In these discussions, it was possible to observe the ability of groups in coordinating the theoretical contents of occupational health with practice, that is, institutional programs and national regulatory standards.

The planning of activities provides the existence of a homogeneity of actions among the diverse groups of students; however, specific requests might indicate the need for specific interventions that are far from the initial planning. During the systematization of this experience, no situation that caused discrepancy among experiences of the diverse groups was found.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the discussions presented as follows result from the evaluation process of systematized actions, based on educational practice carried out from May to December 2015. Individual cases or the profile of students are not reported, so signing of an informed consent form was not required. The procedures respected Resolution no. 466 of the Brazilian National Health Council of December 12, 2012⁽⁶⁾.

● RESULTS

Occupational health is a specialty of some higher education courses in the healthcare area - such as nursing. Therefore, the undertaking of practices in this field requires knowledge that is gradually presented to the undergraduate students of the School of Nursing of the Rio de Janeiro State University, since the beginning of the course. Such knowledge is presented through theoretical classes and biosafety and ergonomic actions included in care activities, that must, however, progress toward an expanded critical view not yet mastered until the last two undergraduate semesters. Therefore, the first challenge to the occupational health internship was to provide the theoretical base for the supervised undertaking of specific practices.

The theoretical activities were carried out in the practice scenario, with the presentation of specific regulatory standards and the National Worker's Health Policy. Questioning was the methodology used, in which the undergraduate students were able to associate the content presented with their previous experiences, based on a continuous and non-hierarchical dialogue.

After the presentation of the theoretical basis, experiences of nursing students in the occupational health internship were divided into three stages: 1) Participation in the unit's occupational health programs; 2) Education in occupation health; 3) Analysis of environmental risks at specific wards.

Regarding the participation of students in the unit's occupational health programs, the Occupational Tuberculosis Program (PTO, as per its acronym in Portuguese) was presented with learning practices during the entire period, in order to previously detect patients with respiratory symptoms associated with tuberculosis.

The PTO focus is to prevent the illness of workers, since a single case might lead to several contaminations. It is worth mentioning that the program also fulfills an important educational role in the professional practice of workers involved, since at each search, questions that help understand tuberculosis are clarified, which might be considered an important epidemiological control device.

The inclusion of students in the PTO occurred through weekly active search of patients, families, or workers with suggestive symptoms of infection by pulmonary tuberculosis in the hospital's selected wards. It is worth mentioning that all sectors of the teaching hospital are weekly evaluated; however, due to time restrictions, the students of the nursing internship were responsible for some wards selected by the local occupational health service.

At the beginning, the search carried out in the PTO context generated doubts from nursing teams regarding the activity's relevance. However, overtime – and with weekly guidelines of students on the need for tuberculosis control, not only a change was observed in this activity's receptivity, but also an increase in reports of suspected cases.

In some sectors analyzed, the increase in the number of suspected cases was higher than 50%; however, changes in absolute numbers of individuals with tuberculosis were not found. Learning practices in situations of possible cases of tuberculosis ranged according to the type of suspicion. In cases in which patients were supposed to be ill, the procedure of students was restricted to collection of data from medical records and follow-up of results of diagnostic tests. In the case of families or visitors, the learning practice basically comprised health education. However, situations in which professionals of the hospital were involved, the learning practice covered a detailed symptomatic evaluation, transcription of information for the specialized service, immediate referral of workers, and follow-up of cases.

The regular contact with professionals of wards investigated by the group inside the PTO gave rise to other questions that generated doubts to teams, leading to the development of the second group of

learning activities: Education in occupational health.

Based on questions of healthcare professionals and considering the difficulty in undertaking continuous education activities with professionals of wards due to their work routine, the group prepared posters on waste managing and use of personal protective equipment. The aim of the students was that this material was an incentive for reflection of nursing professionals regarding problems in their routine and the consolidation of the educational link with hospitalization units, in order to create an opportunity for dialogue and establish a strong partnership in this qualification process.

The approach of the internship team with wards assisted by the PTO, combined with the delivery of the educational material, led to the partnership between the team and a specialized sector of the hospital for the development of continuous education activities. Initially, the proposal was the development of an educational time with the nursing technical team, whose approach would be aimed at the "use of personal protective equipment during the undertaking of procedures in wards." However, the action was extended for some more weeks, so that all working teams in the sector could be presented with the activity. In addition, nursing interns were also included in the target audience. The groups of students involved planned, programmed, and carried out the activity under direct teaching supervision.

The dynamics undertaken in this activity was the circle of conversation, associated with a quiz of questions and responses about the main theme. The proposal was that the activity was not only a formal education time, but also a possibility for creating bonds, since every discussion generated was based on the target audience's own experience. In addition, printed material was prepared for future references of professionals of that sector.

Finally, as the third group of activities developed by the students, analysis of environmental risks at specific wards was carried out. The analysis of environmental risks carried out with students of the nursing undergraduate course might be considered a preparation for the construction of an Environmental Risk Prevention Program (PPRA, as per its acronym in Portuguese). This is because, in view of the students' turnover, there is not enough time for the undertaking of all stages involved in this process, which include: annual planning with establishment of goals defined with the multidisciplinary team, priorities and schedule; strategy and methodology of action; form of registration, maintenance and dissemination of data; frequency and form of evaluation of the PPRA development.

The aim of this activity was to show students, risks to which workers are exposed inside specific wards in the institution, such as nephrology, pediatrics, medical clinic, and intensive care unit, enabling them to analyze other practice environments under a reflective and resolute view, thus intervening in risk situations already existent in occupational areas.

Therefore, the first stage for the undertaking of the activity was the choice of areas available for analysis. Three units were selected, whose internship team was included, based on the sensitization of nurses responsible for such sectors. It is worth mentioning that no kind of resistance or tension among work teams was found.

The second stage consisted of the identification of risk groups to be evaluated. The abovementioned evaluation checks the health damage potential caused by the exposure of individuals to environmental agents. The third stage was the tabulation of risks found. Quantification of these risks resulted in 5 physical risks; 7 chemical risks; 14 biological risks; 3 ergonomic risks, and 4 accidental risks. It is worth mentioning that these risks were found in several environments of the scenario analyzed; however, they were only quantified once.

The fourth stage of this process was based on learning interventions. Due to time restriction, the students of the nursing internship only carried out educational interventions, that is, they practiced based on risks caused especially by human behavior, such as the use of adornments in work environments.

At the end of this activity, a report with all risks found and suggestions for their possible minimization was carried out. This material was delivered to the unit's occupational health center in printed and digital format. The release of the material to the sectors analyzed was carried out in digital format by the occupational health center.

● DISCUSSION

It is already known that the early involvement of students with environmental work issues in practical classes and internships provides the development of actions aimed at health itself, and the possibility of reproducing these actions when becoming a worker and coordinator of health actions⁽⁷⁾.

Therefore, the education of students must be based on methodological proposals that enable critical and intellectual growth, such as questioning. Actions based on this perspective enable students to develop critical thinking on scientific knowledge, based on problematic situations of daily practices that involve individuals, life style, social relationships, and work market, promoting collective strategical solutions⁽⁸⁻⁹⁾.

The participation of students in the unit's occupational health programs promotes the objectives of the PTO, with measures proposed by the Ministry of Health for tuberculosis control in Brazil as follows: 1. To optimize the search for patients with respiratory symptoms; 2. To establish an effective care flow to patients with respiratory symptoms, prioritizing diagnosis and the beginning of the treatment; 3. To undertake health surveillance practices⁽¹⁰⁾.

The undertaking of educational activities proposed by the students followed the theoretical and methodological framework of continuing education in healthcare. According to the National Policy of Continuing Education in Health⁽¹¹⁾, continuing education consists of learning during the work practice. Such process allows the transformation of professional practices and work organization, which happen in the daily life of people and organizations, based on problems faced, and knowledge and experiences of individuals involved.

The proposal of continuing education in health in the transformation perspective is an alternative for traditional educational methods, with a combination between theory and practice undertaken by individuals and workers, in the historical, social, economic, political, and ethical context⁽¹²⁾.

Regarding survey of health risks, the legislation is constituted by several instruments that assist registered nurses in the maintenance of the health condition of workers. One of the main devices used is the evaluation of environmental risks to health established by the Brazilian Regulatory Standard no. 9, of December 29, 1994, and is formally identified as Environmental Risk Prevention Program. Its main purpose is the maintenance of occupational health, through recognition and interventions associated with possible environmental risks in the work environment⁽¹³⁾.

Therefore, the classification of risks used was: chemical, physical, biological, ergonomic and accidental⁽¹⁴⁾, in with the Regulatory Standard no. 32 of August 20, 2011, whose main theme is "Occupational health in healthcare services"⁽¹⁵⁾.

● CONCLUSION

Activities carried out in the occupational health internship aim at providing students with a first experience in this specialty, sensitizing them to reflect on processes of illness at work and naturalization of health risks in the hospital environment.

The undertaking of the actions described contributed to promote a critical and reflective view of interns towards the inadequacies present in the work environment, under the ethical and legal perspective of professional practice and adequacy to the Brazilian legislation regarding occupational health, in addition to providing a greater clarity on the occupational health work process.

Experiences carried out by nursing undergraduate students will be valuable for their professional lives, since they not only aim at technical skills, but also at the reflection on providing care.

This report experience is expected to sensitize professors of nursing undergraduate education institutions on the importance of these activities for technical, scientific, and social education of nurses. After all, the supply of actions in occupational health contributes significantly to promote health and increase quality of life at work, reducing the number of illnesses and work leaves.

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