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## Clinical skills for newly graduated nurses: Theory-Practice gap

Dear Editor,

Nursing education consists of classroom and clinical training to demonstrate clinical competence based on theoretical concepts learned. However, there is a lack of clinical abilities demonstrated and theoretical knowledge gained from pre-qualified nursing education and the preparation of new graduates. Furthermore, graduates often believe that the lessons learned do not reflect the actualities faced in clinical fields. This discrepancy is known as the theory-practice gap among graduate nurses who are theoretically but not practically equipped to apply theory and knowledge to practice in the clinical environment. Graduate nurses working in high-risk fields can struggle to integrate theoretical concepts into the clinical environment, leading to patient safety risks and potential adverse outcomes. Furthermore, the new graduates experience a deficit that contributed to decreased job satisfaction, increased job turnover rates, and patient care mistakes. This paper aims to address the gap between nursing education and practice in the nursing profession.

The nurse's role has grown substantially in recent years due to the shift in patients' medical needs. Nurses are no longer just the "bedside healers" who hand you your medication and make sure your bedpan is clean, and they are also critical components of your healthcare team. The shift in inpatient medical needs requires more than just bedside healers. Nurses want to work on the skills needed for clinicians. Nurses need to take any

opportunity they can get to stand out more than ever (1). Over the past 30 years, nurses' education has been shifted from hospitals to universities. The theory part has begun to gain greater popularity in nursing education. Literature shows a clear gap between classroom teaching and student nurses' experiences in clinical areas (2).

Nurses are essential to excellent health care at all levels and provide complex patient services in different facilities. These services are only provided if the nursing profession has excellent clinical knowledge of nursing and can meet the needs of many different public health services. In view of the needs of the general public, new graduate nurses must be educated and equipped to use the clinical skills needed after nursing school with confidence. However, clinical competence is only part of providing excellent health care, and new graduate nurses must make the best clinical judgment for patients (3).

Nursing is a holistic approach involving caring for people with compassion, but it has changed because patients expect to be treated quickly and transferred to the next. In addition, nurses face challenges because they are challenged in clinical fields and

do not have the necessary capacity to cope with daily situations (4). Therefore, this article aims to review the gap between theory and practice in the workplace nursing profession. It is important to think about the differences between theories and practices. As defined by dictionaries, a theory is a set of statements or principles devised to explain a group of facts or phenomena, especially one that has been repeatedly tested or is widely accepted and can be used to make predictions about natural phenomena. Practice is defined as the act or the process of doing something, performance, or action. In definition, these terms appear to be at odds with each other, but when considered in terms of professional setup, they have to enable the application of 'applying the theory into practice'(5).

New graduate nurses face challenges transitioning from school to clinical training, affecting their performance. These challenges include knowledge level, physical demands, social acceptance stress from colleagues, and adaptation to new working environment culture. Concern about nurses' competence stems from the rise in-hospital mortality rates in the United States. New and experienced nurses are highly expected to provide effective and safe patient care. There is still no clear answer to whether the

new graduate nurses lack the appropriate education or if there is excessive pressure on the schools to quickly graduate a larger number of nurses to fill the increasing need for nurses in the clinical environment.

The transition from nursing student to nurse work has proven to be a difficult transition that many researchers have studied. Some studies show that new graduate nurses lack the necessary skills to play the role of nurses without clinical experience. New graduate nurses are faced with many different challenges and intense pressures to meet the expectations of their profession. The nursing education programme encourages professional nurses to integrate theory and practice to provide high-quality nursing care in practice. Practical learning allows nurses to provide nursing care based on their knowledge. Nursing is an important field where knowledge is applied after education to practical skills. The distinction between theory and practice is one of the many topics of nursing discussion issues, such as the unresolved threads of a long time (6).

Though nurses have been required to do more than ever before, the way they prepare for and embark on this career path has remained unchanged. According to a survey, 83% of new graduate nurses did not receive any formal training in their profession before starting work. A survey has found that 80% of nurses believe that this is a problem in their workplace (7). 90% have expressed the intention to work one or more additional days as they describe as 'clinical application' days. A gap has been found between the educational experience and the level of competence required by the clinical setting. Nursing students need to be prepared for various clinical settings where they will be called on to use a wide range of skills and techniques (8).

The nursing programs lack clinical skills, but the issue stems from what is being taught to the students. For example, nurses are not learning how to keep infections out of hospitals by washing their hands properly. Students have not gained the necessary knowledge because they are being taught about theory rather than clinical practice. Another issue is that teachers have difficulty keeping up with the fast-paced changes in nursing because they were trained before many of these changes occurred (9). The new generation of nurses lacks adequate on-the-job training due to the uncertainty of getting a job offer after finishing their course. Nurses are also not given enough time on-site with patients during their graduate studies for practical experience (10). This is because patients are generally only admitted for short periods during their stay at hospitals or nursing homes.

There is a considerable gap between the skills required from a nursing student to provide clinical skills. A nursing student needs to know pre-hospital, hospital, home care, treatments, associated procedures, and first aid. This gap could be due to insufficient preparation for clinical scenarios or not nursing educators practicing these skills. The solution should provide sufficient clinical skills preparations for nursing students, engage teachers to practice these skills, and engage clinical professionals

to participate in the education of the students (11).

In this regard, organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) endorsed articulation arrangements allowing post-secondary students across countries to access top traditional higher education. However, though other academic institutions offer certificates or diplomas in nursing assistant studies, not all of them have been recognized by ILO. Others push to improve the training opportunities by increasing the hours of accommodation visits, block releases, and summer programs to see long-lasting changes. Nurses should start preparing for the workplace before they graduate. That way, they can be more prepared for these future challenges. Primarily focus on supporting collaboration between academics and clinicians, establishing a research culture in a clinical environment, and improving access to research. In order to do so, practitioners need access to current information, learning resources, and opportunities for continuous education.

The theory-practice gap, it would seem, is a multifaceted problem. The most common reasons included that the theory was about building a knowledge base while practice was about learning nursing skills. Education is an essential element of the preparation of nurses for real situations. However, education must include theory and nursing practice, and the teaching of excellent teachers in these two areas is linked (12). New graduate nurses must be confident and prepared to take on a role that will life-changing environment. Nurses are stressed because nurses know that the health of patients is dependent on good care. Research in this field is essential to ensure the workforce is equipped with the best-qualified nurses. Thus, overall, it is quite evident that the gap exists and has areas that can be improved. Strategies for solving this problem include re-examining the curriculum and liaising between education and practice. In education and clinical environments, leaders and followers will create operational plans for this proposed model and link it to benefits to make nursing professionals beneficial at large.

#### **Conflict of interests**

*The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in the study.*

#### **Financial Disclosure**

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