Would you recommend nursing as a career to men?

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This article was originally published as:

Original article available here:
http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/centresresearch/documents/wphs/DSCould%20you%20recommend%20nursing.pdf
Would you recommend nursing as a career to men?

David Stanley, Tania Beament, Darren Falconer, Margaret Haigh, Rosemary Saunders, Karen Stanley, Peter Wall

Abstract

Objective: The principle objective of this study was to establish a profile and perception of men in nursing in Western Australia. This paper will discuss one sub-objective which sort to explore responses to the question: “Would you recommend a nursing as a career to males that you know?”

Design: Main study was a quantitative, descriptive survey design, however the question under review was significantly qualitative in nature and analysed as such.

Setting: The study took place across Western Australian public and private sector health care facilities, nurse education institutions and non-government providers across rural, remote and metropolitan locations.

Main outcome measures: Data was collected through responses to one question (within a larger survey) that related to recommending nursing as a career to males. An online survey instrument was used.

Results: 70.5% (n=377) said they would recommend nursing to males. Of the respondents that selected “yes” 19.6% were male and 80.4% were female. Of the 29.5% (n=158) respondents that selected “no” 24.7% were male and 75.3% female.

Qualitative data reported supports the perceptions in the current workforce.

Conclusion: Whilst the majority of respondents in the study would recommend a career in nursing to men, a quarter of respondents felt that a career in nursing was not suited to men. Reasons identified included: poor pay, a difficult job, men’s values were incompatible with care, or that they were using nursing as a spring board to other careers. Identifying the perceptions of men in nursing and if current nurses would promote nursing to males they knew assists in the potential recruitment of a much needed future workforce.

Introduction

Much of the literature about men in nursing asserts that nursing remains the dominion of women (White, 2014; Maiolo, 2014; Olson, 2014). However, within the media there is an acknowledgment that a change is taking place, as men are entering nursing in greater numbers and even taking a hand in the recruitment of other men into nursing (Olson, 2014). Within the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA) and Australia evidence suggests that the percentage of men in nursing is increasing (Marsh, 2014; Pratt, 2014; Stanley, 2014; O’Lynn & Tranbarger 2007) and there are claims that nursing will have a more sustainable workforce if nurses are recruited from across the population spectrum (O’Lynn, 2013).

This article offers the results of one question dissected from a larger study of the profile and perceptions of men in nursing and midwifery in Western Australia undertaken between 2013/2014.
nurses in particular in films is generally a negative one, with men shown as being morally corrupt, effeminate or simply incompetent (Stanley, 2012). Portraying male nurses in this way has a serious effect on the perception of male nurses, which may in turn have a negative impact on the recruitment of men to nursing. Positive images of men in nursing are to be encouraged into the workplace.Slotkin (1973) held strongly to the traditional view of the image of nursing to ensure that it reflects gender diversity. It appears that it is not solely external factors that have prevented the development of different characteristics between male nurses and Australian male nurses. The findings indicated that there were different and oppressive characteristics between male nurses and male engineers, with the male nurses believing that they had no role to offer something different that adds value to the nursing profession. Another respondent suggested that, “male nurses can be caring and also calm when it becomes very hectic” (Female).

4. Suitable for Both: Nursing is a career suited to both men and women. It was also clear that respondents saw nursing as suited to both men and women. Male respondents also commented that, “gender makes no difference when it comes to sincerely caring” (Male). Another added that it was a “good career choice for both genders” (Female). One respondent added, “regardless of sex anyone with a passion for nursing, team work and the delivery of healthcare has something to offer the profession” (Female).

5. Helping Others: Nursing is a career for helping others and serving the community. Working Papers in the Health Sciences 1:14 Winter 2016 ISSN 2051-6266 / 20160082

6. Only the Right Man: While they would recommend nursing to men they knew, they would only do so to the ‘right’ men. A strong theme was that nurses would recommend nursing to men they knew, if they were the “right” men for the job or “if they are interested” (Female). Another said, “nursing is a physically and mentally active job that they might be interested in thinking about” (Male). The following view paralleled this opinion, “I would tell them that nurses can make a positive contribution to the team and when it becomes very hectic” (Female).
Introduction

Reynolds et al. felt nursing offered poorly paid work with comments such as: “poor earning capacity” (Female), “allied health positions are afforded better recognition and do not have the same string of workloads, most other professionals (Male).”

Discussion

While the larger study aimed to establish a profile and perceptions of men in nursing in Western Australia, this paper has focused on the question within the study that sought to explore respondent’s answers to the question: “Would you recommend nursing as a career for men and women?” (Male).

Another respondent said, “in a female dominated profession pay is lower, promotional positions once SRN are very limited and often require a move away from patient care. Another respondent said, “(Male) in Mental Health are quite often seen as security officer/bully boys to deal with aggressive clients” (Male).

4. Too Difficult: Nursing is too difficult for men to do, and too difficult for them (Female).

Others felt nursing was too difficult a career for men saying, “the study is tough” (Female) or that there was a, “low benchmark to enter nursing lowering the standard and there is a lack of male role models or peer support...the work is just too difficult (find an easier job) / always need to do more study” (Male).

5. Wrong Values: Men’s values and interests are not reflected in the nursing profession.

Respondents also said that men’s values and interests conflict with nursing and that “(Male) will go for management positions was only slightly higher than those selected by women (11.3% men / 10.5% women)” (Male).

One of the strongest themes to emerge from the larger study, almost twice as many men (21.4% males / 11.7% female) suggested that while a disadvantage of nursing was the lack of ability to work independently and significantly more men suggested that while nursing was suited to both (39.2% male / 25.2% female) (Male).

Recommendations

Most nurses would recommend a career in nursing to men that they know because it is a good career choice, it allows men to make a positive contribution to the health care of others and as long as the man is, ‘the right man’ and focused on helping others or adding something of value to nursing they would be welcome” and encouraged to join the profession. About a quarter of respondents felt a nursing career was not suitable for everyone and in particular, men. As well, the pay was poor, the job too hard, that men had inappropriate values or that men were using a nursing career as a spring board to other careers would not recommend a career in nursing to men they knew. However, it is worth noting, as one person commented, “regardless of sex anyone with a passion for nursing, team work and the delivery of healthcare has something to offer the profession” (Female).

Acknowledgements

Western Australia Nurses Memorial Charitable Trust, WA Department of Health, Chief Nurse and Midwives Office

Conclusion

Most nurses would recommend a career in nursing to men that they know because

Working Papers in the Health Sciences 1:14 Winter 2016 ISSN 2051-6266 / 20160082
References


