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## PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE OF MENTORS DURING THE PRE-GRADUATION TRAINEESHIP OF FUTURE NURSES

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**Abstract:** Modern European systems of education and training in the field of healthcare are designed to train competent professionals able to provide high quality healthcare to society, and also motivated to continue improving their education and training. The job of the registered nurse requires high professionalism and participation in continuous post-graduate training and courses so that nurses can maintain a high level of competence.

The mentor of future nurses has to be able to identify the different levels of acquired knowledge, skills and competences in trainees.

**Aim:** The aim of this study is to establish the pedagogical competence of mentors and their readiness and preparation to participate in the process of training and education during the pre-graduation traineeship of the future registered nurse.

**Methods and subjects:** In order to research the opinion of mentors of their own pedagogical competence and skills to participate in the training process during pre-graduation traineeship of the trainee-nurses assigned to them, we surveyed mentors at the following university hospitals – ‘St. George’ University Hospital, Plovdiv, MPHAL AD Haskovo, ‘Dr. At. Dafovski’ MPHAT Kardzhali, University Hospital – Stara Zagora.

**Findings and discussion:** The questionnaire included questions to the mentors for the purpose of establishing their opinion of the required pedagogical competences and the need of further training of the mentors, and, if such need is established, the topics that should be covered. Further training of mentors shall facilitate a better quality training process during pre-graduation traineeships. By mastering pedagogical and methodological skills for working with trainees, mentors will be able to participate more fully and productively in the practical training of the students.

**Conclusion:** The high competence of the mentor comprises skills to communicate efficiently and demonstrate a kind and positive attitude to students and patients, and gain their confidence.

**Keywords:** mentors, trainee-nurses, pre-graduation training.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Modern European educational systems in the field of healthcare are designed to educate and train competent professionals able to provide society with high quality healthcare, as well as motivated to continue their education and training.

The profession of the nurse calls for high professionalism and participation in continuous training and post-graduate courses so as to maintain a high level of competence. B. Tornyova and P. Kasnakova define “...competences as knowledge, skills and experience in performing specific tasks and manipulations, and competence – as an integral personal quality reflecting the extent to which a person possesses the range of competences which make him/her competent in a certain field and allow him/her to make the right decisions in various situations, to improve his/her qualifications, to strive after self-improvement...”[5].

The modern development of the profession is unthinkable without the needed knowledge, skills, experience and a fully developed system of values connected with the care of man. The professional requirements to the registered nurse focus of communication skills, theoretical and clinical knowledge and the ability to put it into practice effectively, responsible attitude and the ability to make informed independent decisions [4].

The mastering of practical skills by the future nurses should take place along with the development of an appropriate pattern of behavior to patients and colleagues. That is why mentors are expected to possess communication skills, to be good listeners, to be able to implement their theoretical knowledge, to be responsible and have a positive attitude to their work and their students, to be constructive, to be able to truly guide their trainees, to strive to create an

atmosphere of trust and partnership, to be tactful, and, above all, to serve as role models to their students with their professionalism and personal qualities. It is of vital importance to health specialists to master the medical manipulations connected with care of the patient, to improve their personal skills, and to acquire valuable knowledge, insight and style of conduct in their chosen career path [1].

The mentor of the future medical specialists should be able to detect the different levels of acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences in the trainees, namely:

- Adopting the rules and requirements of the good medical practice.
- Overcoming the initial difficulties that may arise in the process of performing various medical activities and manipulations.
- Improving the competence in performing various medical manipulations and patterns of communicating with patients and their families, as well as with their colleagues in various situations.
- Consolidating the acquired knowledge and skills and implementing them in their work – systematic implementation of what they have learned during their pre-graduation traineeship.
- Developing in the future health specialists and improving their competences and skills to such an extent that they become automatic.

In order to take an active part in the practical training of future nurses, mentors have to possess pedagogical competences. According to B. Tornyova and P. Kasnakova, “Pedagogical competence includes didactic, andragogical, communicative, docimological, intercultural, information (digital) competence”[5].

The modern development of the nursing profession is unthinkable without knowledge, experience, perfectionism and a system of values which allows for a daily manifestation of humaneness in the care of a person – ill or healthy.

## 2. AIM

This study aims to establish the pedagogical competence of mentors and their ability to participate in the training process during the pre-graduation traineeship of the future registered nurses.

## 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to establish the opinion of mentors of their pedagogical competence and ability to take an active part in the training process during the pre-graduation traineeship of their trainees – future registered nurses, we surveyed mentors at the following university hospitals: ‘St. George’ University Hospital, Plovdiv; University Hospital, Haskovo; ‘Dr. At. Dafovski’ University Hospital, Kardzhali; University Hospital, Stara Zagora.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The questions to the mentors in the questionnaire were designed to establish their opinion regarding the necessary pedagogical competences and the need of further training of the mentors, and, if such training proves to be necessary, the topics that should be included.

The mentors stated that those without pedagogical qualifications and without a Bachelor’s and/or Master’s degree in Healthcare Management, need to undergo a training course on methods of teaching and training /27.20%, and medical pedagogy – 13.20%; 3.8% believe they need to get acquainted with the control and assessment requirements /docimology/ /Fig.1/.

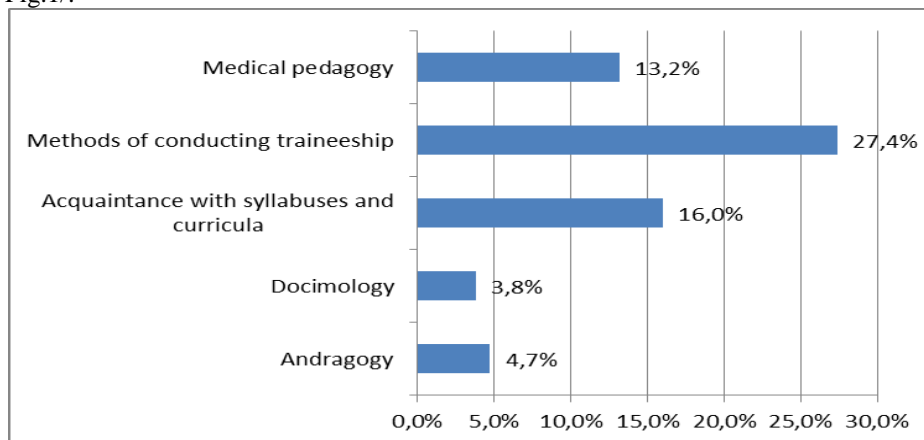


Fig.1. The opinion of mentors on the need of further training

The mentor has to be able to assess the performance of the trainee, and not assign tasks that the trainee is unable to accomplish due to lack of competence. The mentor should also discuss with the trainee possible errors and demonstrate tolerance. That is why 16% of the mentors consider the good knowledge of the training documentation and syllabuses is also important /Fig.1/.

The further training of mentors will contribute to conducting a high quality process of training and education during the pre-graduation traineeship. By mastering pedagogical and methodological competences to work with trainees, mentors will be able to participate most efficiently in the training of students.

In the conducted survey, it was of great interest to us to investigate the opinion of the respondents on the qualities that a good mentor should possess. In order to achieve to the greatest degree the aims of the process of training, mentors should have certain qualities and values. Similarly to the tutor, the mentor can contribute a lot to the formation of a good registered nurse, or conversely, hamper his/her professional development. The results of the survey show that, according to the mentors participating in it, the leading quality is professionalism – 84.9%, followed by the ability to work in a team – 61.3%, and a sense of responsibility – 59.4% /Fig.2/.



**Fig.2. Vital qualities of the good mentor /according to the surveyed mentors/**

An interesting dependency in terms of “age”- the respondents aged 51+ believe that mentors do not need skills to pass their knowledge on to their students  $P < 0,05$  ( $\chi^2=9,3$ ) and communication skills  $P < 0,01$  ( $\chi^2=12,09$ ). Mentors with greater experience probably believe they have these competences and qualities, and do not need to improve them.

The professional competence of medical specialists is a mandatory condition for achieving higher quality medical services and better health status of society. When well qualified, equipped with clinical knowledge and practical skills, medical specialists will be useful and will facilitate the processes of improvement of the healthcare system by applying the principles of appropriateness, promptness, efficiency, orderliness, humaneness and scientific relevance [2]. The provision of quality education and training is the responsibility of all the participants in this process – lecturers, tutors, mentors, students, institutional management – since the ultimate aim is to improve the quality of healthcare [3].

## 5. CONCLUSION

The expertise of the mentor is expressed in his/her skills to communicate appropriately with and to demonstrate a caring attitude to both students and patients, and to gain their confidence. The good mentor is a key factor in the development of students’ competences in the conditions of their pre-graduation traineeship.

The conducted survey of mentors provides sufficient grounds for the following **conclusions** to be drawn:

1. As the mentor is a key figure in students’ pre-graduation traineeship, his/her professional and personal competences and qualities are of vital importance for the optimization of the pre-graduation training.
2. The surveyed mentors agree that they should meet certain requirements and criteria.
3. Methodological and pedagogical training should be provided for mentors, which will allow them to participate even more efficiently in students’ practical training.

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