



Exploring Knowledge and Attitudes about Aging Pre- and Post-Gerontologic Content and Experience in an Advanced Practice Nursing Curriculum.

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Introduction

- By 2030, the US population aged 65+ will be 20% of the total population;
- By 2050, 85 million Americans will be 65 or older (9).
- Aging population requires:
 - ❖ chronic conditions
 - ❖ extended support services
 - ❖ and preventive approaches
- Healthcare has contributed to prolonged life expectancy there is great concern about the reluctance among healthcare professionals, including nurses, to embrace a career focused on older adults.
 - ❖ Age bias (AGEISM) is alive and well in healthcare.
 - ❖ Attitude affects behavior and knowledge acquisition (1)
- Researchers studied undergraduate nursing students & allied health to explore students' attitudes towards aging (5).
- Study results ranged from 'somewhat positive' to 'negative' attitudes towards aging.
- These findings raise concerns about the future of quality, compassionate, and person-centered healthcare for older adults as the population continues to age.
- Knowledge deficits were also common.
- No studies were found that specifically looked at experienced nurses returning to school to seek a graduate degree in advanced nursing practice;
 - ❖ this group of professionals will have a great influence on older adult healthcare in the future
 - ❖ AND is the subject of this ongoing research.

Purpose

- This five-year study was initiated to identify changes in knowledge about aging and attitudes towards aging in experienced nurses who were enrolled in a graduate program in nursing before and after engaging in the graduate nursing curriculum content and clinical requirements.

Ageism – Alive and Well



- During the first class session of the Care of the Older Adult course, students were asked the following question, with verbal answers shared on a whiteboard:
- "What are your thoughts when you are about to meet or provide care for an 85-year-old patient?"
- This word image is a replica of actual graduate student responses.
- Class discussion follows focused on ageism, identifying the negative as well as a few positive biases, and leading to an important urgency that nursing leaders must address these issues.

Methods

- **Design** – (1) The Facts on Aging Quiz (FAQ) (Palmore, 1998) is administered within the first semester of the advanced nursing practice curriculum and repeated in the final semester.
- (2) The Attitudes Toward Older People Scale (KAOP) (Kogan, 1961) is administered within the first semester of the advanced nursing practice curriculum and repeated in the final semester.
- **Participants** – All nursing students enrolled in the Florida Southern College School of Nursing Graduate Program (nurse practitioner, clinical nurse specialist, and nurse educator tracks).
- **Procedure** – Approved by the Florida Southern College Institutional Review Board. Each incoming class participates as part of the graduate program introductory process and again prior to graduation.

Results

- These results represent the first two years of this five year study (2012 – 2017). 102 graduate students in the advanced nursing practice tracks (Master's of Science in Nursing) participated. A one-group pretest-post-test design was used. Data were collected between Fall 2012 and Summer 2015. Each of four student cohorts was tested in the first semester and again prior to graduation. Two well-validated and reliable instruments were used; 1) the Palmore Facts on Aging Quiz (25 items, each with a correct and incorrect option and including positive, negative and neutral aspects); and 2) the Kogan Attitudes about Older People (KAOP) scale (34 items of which 17 are positive and 17 negative).
- Knowledge about older adults (FAQ) showed significant improvement ($P < 0.0001$) between Time 1 and Time 2 for each cohort.
- Attitudes about older adults (KAOP) showed a significant improvement ($P < 0.0001$) between Time 1 and Time 2 for each cohort.

Conclusions

- Although even seasoned nurses begin graduate school with;
 - ❖ a demonstrated age bias,
 - ❖ poor knowledge about aging,
 - ❖ and negative attitudes about aging,
- There is a statistically significant improvement after exposure to course content, clinical experience, and faculty input.

Next Steps

- Future study plans include the correlation of ongoing survey scores with:
 - ❖ student demographics,
 - ❖ learning choices,
 - ❖ past life experiences,
 - ❖ and future professional goals.
- Post-graduation follow-up will address:
 - ❖ employment choices,
 - ❖ individual future education goals,
 - ❖ and professional experience.

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