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Creating Opportunities and Occasions to Promote a European Result-based Action for Training and Education - COOPERATE

**Country based needs Assessment facing Covid
Crisis (Problems of health-care professionals,
health-care organizations)**

Developed by InnovED & University of Thessaly

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ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
ΘΕΣΣΑΛΙΑΣ

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This study aimed to identify learning gaps and challenges, needed skills, qualifications and competencies of health care professionals facing covid - 19 crisis in Greece and examine opinions regarding optimal education in these conditions.

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Introduction

The survey was designed to evaluate ideal and current ability and responsibility of health care professionals to plan, organize, design and evaluate the care provided. Also, could determine the ability to design communication and consulting in a person- and situation – oriented approach. Another section under consideration is the ability of health care professionals to collaborate in different systemic context as well as to reflect and justify one's own actions on the basis of laws, regulations ethical guidelines, scientific evidence and professional ethical values and attitudes. The survey was sent to health care professionals that work in primary, secondary and tertiary health care units in private and public sector.

Current nursing education is suboptimal, although the degree differs in the opinion of health care professionals. This study identified topics and methods of education which could be focused upon to improve nursing education and training.

Background

The primary goals of nursing education remain always the same: nurses must be prepared to meet diverse patients' needs; function as leaders; and advance science that benefits patients and the capacity of health professionals to deliver safe, quality patient care. At the same time, nursing education needs to be transformed in a number of ways to prepare nursing graduates to work collaboratively and effectively with other health professionals in a complex and evolving health care system in a variety of settings. Entry-level nurses, for example, need to be able

to transition smoothly from their academic preparation to a range of practice environments, with an increased emphasis on community and public health settings. And advanced practice registered nurses need graduate programs that can prepare them to assume their roles in primary care, acute care, long-term care, and other settings, as well as specialty practices.

Summary of the Survey

The questionnaire is distributed via e-mail between November 21 and December 4, 2022. It was sent to a total of 55 people, who work in primary, secondary and tertiary care, in the private and public sectors in the city of Larissa (Greece) and 32 people responded (response rate 58%). The questionnaire consists of 6 thematic sections and a total of 25 questions.

Results

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in table 1.

Table 1. General characteristics of survey respondents.

General Characteristics	N/Total (%)
1.What is your age?	
Under 18	0
18-34 years	20/32 (62,5)
35-54 years	11/32 (34,4)
55-70 years	1/32 (3,1)
2.What gender do you have?	
Woman	24/32 (75)
Man	8/32 (25)
Non-binary	0
Prefer not to say	0
3.What level of education do you have?	
Higher Secondary Education (High School)	3/32 (9,4)
Post-secondary Education (IEK)	1/32 (3,1)
University Education (TEI, HEI)	14/32 (43,8)
Postgraduate education (Master's, PhD)	14/32 (43,8)
4.What is your main focus of your profession in the health care sector?	
Mental Health Nursing	3/32 (9,4)

Palliative and Supportive Nursing Care	0
Gerontological Nursing	1/32 (3,1)
Pathological Nursing	3/32 (9,4)
Cardiovascular Nursing	0
Oncology Nursing	0
Children's Nursing	2/32 (6,3)
Community Nursing	8/32 (25)
Other	15/32 (46,9)
5. How many years have you been working in your profession?	
< 5 years	14/32 (43,8)
5-10 years	10/32 (31,3)
10-15 years	3/32 (9,4)
>15 years	5/32 (15,6)
6. In what kind of organization do you work?	
Primary Care	16/32 (50)
Hospital Care	11/32 (34,4)
Specialized Care (ICU, Artificial Kidney Unit)	5/32 (15,6)
7. Do you work in shifts?	
Yes	17/32 (53,1)
No	15/32 (46,9)

Table 2 summarizes key findings with regards the ability and responsibility of health care professionals to plan, organize, design and evaluate the care provided for people of all age group in a responsible manner. Based on this survey results, it appears that a significant percentage (37.5 and 46.9, 84.4% in total) feel capable of taking responsibility to plan, organize, design, control and evaluate nursing processes and nursing diagnostics in both acute and permanent situations. Also, as we can see in the table the health professionals seem to have high percentages in all the questions about their ability as described in the question.

Table 2. Planning, Organization, Design and Evaluation of care for people of all age groups in a responsible manner.

	does not apply at all	rather not applicable	more likely true	completely true	I can not estimate
8. I am able to take responsibility for planning, organizing, designing, controlling and evaluating nursing processes and nursing diagnostics in both	0	4/32 (12,5)	12/32 (37,5)	15/32 (46,9)	1/32 (3,1)

acute and permanent nursing situations.					
9.I can responsibly plan, organize, design, control and evaluate nursing processes and nursing diagnostics including health promotion and prevention for people of all ages with health problems	0	5/32 (15,6)	5/32 (15,6)	19/32 (59,4)	3/32 (9,4)
10.I am able to responsibly plan, organize, design, direct and evaluate the nursing processes and nursing diagnostics of people in highly stressful and critical life situations.	0	4/32 (12,5)	7/32 (21,9)	19/32 (59,4)	2/32 (6,3)
11.I understand how to act effectively in life-threatening situations as well as in crisis or disaster situations.	0	2/32 (6,3)	14/32 (43,8)	15/32 (46,9)	1/32 (3,1)
12.I can support, accompany and advise people in organizing their lives.	1/32 (3,1)	4/32 (12,5)	14/32 (43,8)	13/32 (40,6)	0
13.I am able to encourage development and autonomy over the lifespan.	0	5/32 (15,6)	10/32 (31,3)	17/32 (53,1)	0

Table 3 shows that based upon the survey results the percentage of those who consider that they have difficulty determining the ability to design communication and consulting in a person- and situation – oriented approach in all relevant questions is low compared to those who say that they could not respond to that condition.

Table 3. Designing communication and consulting in a person- and situation-oriented approach.

	does not apply at all	rather not applicable	more likely true	completely true	I can not estimate
14.I am able to communicate and interact with people of all ages and their caregivers in a way that is appropriate for the individual and the situation, and to ensure that adequate information is provided.	1/32 (3,1)	4/32 (12,5)	9/32 (28,1)	18/32 (56,3)	0
15.I am able to responsibly plan, organize, design, control and evaluate counseling, guidance and training with people of all ages.	0	6/32 (18,8)	9/32 (28,1)	17/32 (53,1)	0
16.I am able to act in an ethically reflected manner.	0	2/32 (6,3)	11/32 (34,4)	19/32 (59,4)	0

Table 4 and 5 summarize the ability of health care professionals to collaborate in different systemic context as well as to reflect and justify one’s own actions on the basis of laws, regulations ethical guidelines, scientific evidence and professional ethical values and attitudes.

Table 4. Shaping and contributing to intra- and interprofessional interaction in different systemic context in a responsible manner.

	does not apply at all	rather not applicable	more likely true	completely true	I can not estimate
17.I can take responsibility in the organization of a heterogeneous qualified nursing team.	2/32 (6,3)	5/32 (15,6)	14/32 (43,8)	8/32 (25)	3/32 (9,4)
18.I am able to act in an ethically reflected manner.	0	2/32 (6,3)	9/32 (28,1)	21/32 (65,6)	0
19.I can collaborate in interdisciplinary teams in care and therapy of people of all ages and ensure continuity at interfaces	0	4/32 (12,5)	12/32 (37,5)	16/32 (50)	0

Table 5. Reflect and justify one's own actions on the basis of laws, regulations and ethical guidelines.

	does not apply at all	rather not applicable	more likely true	completely true	I can not estimate
20.I am able to ensure the quality of nursing services while observing both ecological and economic principles.	1/32 (3,1)	1/32 (3,1)	17/32 (53,1)	10/32 (31,1)	3/32 (9,4)
21.I can take into account the context of care and the interdependence in my nursing activities.	0	3/32 (9,4)	15/32 (46,9)	13/32 (40,6)	1/32 (3,1)

Table 6 shows findings with regards the ability and responsibility to reflect and justify one's own actions on the basis of scientific evidence and professional ethical values and attitudes. As we can observe in this question section as well, the professionals seem quite confident in their abilities.

Table 6. Reflect and justify one's own actions on the basis of scientific evidence and professional ethical values and attitudes.

	does not apply at all	rather not applicable	more likely true	completely true	I can not estimate
22.I am able to align nursing actions with current scientific evidence, in particular with nursing science research evidence, theories and models.	1/32 (3,1)	2/32 (6,3)	18/32 (56,3)	10/32 (31,3)	1/32 (3,1)
23.I am able to take responsibility for the development (lifelong learning) of my own personality as well as for my professional self-image.	0	1/32 (3,1)	14/32 (43,8)	17/32 (53,1)	0

Table 7 summarizes the individual challenges and needs in nursing care in specific areas. The professionals answered that their needs for skill development was of high demand regarding evidence- based practice (75%), new technologies/diagnoses/treatments (81,3%), current

research (59,4%), changes in laws or regulations that affect patient care (65,6%), literature (56,2%) and clinical guidelines for nursing (87,5%).

Table 7. Individual challenges and needs in nursing care.

24. Given the challenges in nursing, how do you assess your need for skills development in the following areas:	no need	little demand	high demand	neutral
Evidence-based practice	1/32 (3,1)	4/32 (12,5)	24/32 (75)	3/32 (9,4)
New technologies, diagnoses or treatments	0	5/32 (15,6)	26/32 (81,3)	1/32 (3,1)
Current research	0	9/32 (28,1)	19/32 (59,4)	4/32 (12,5)
Changes in laws or regulations that affect patient care	0	7/32 (21,9)	21/32 (65,6)	4/32 (12,5)
Literature	0	11/32 (34,4)	18/32 (56,2)	3/32 (9,4)
Clinical guidelines for nursing	0	3/32 (9,4)	28/32 (87,5)	1/32 (3,1)

Table 8 shows in free text the most important opinions regarding the educational needs of health professionals.

Table 8. Training needs.

25. Do you have other training needs?
Mainly in public health issues
In cardiopulmonary resuscitation
Administration and organization programs
Integrating interdisciplinarity into the patient care plan.
Crisis, Relationship management and psychological support
In addition to clinical guidelines, there should also be clinical realistic practices that are consistent with the needs of nursing care for patients.
Yes, in terms of means of protection in the event of a new pandemic.
Management
Education in vulnerable populations
Of course. Education and learning are mandated for everyone's consideration

Summary of the Interview

Three nurses participated in the interview. The first approach in all cases was through a face-to-face meeting held in the researcher's office in

order to describe the purpose of the project, to give them the interview questions in text form so that they had the necessary time to prepare as well as the consent form if they accepted the invitation.

From now on, I call Nurse I the first nurse who participated, Nurse II the second nurse and Nurse III the third nurse.

NURSE I

Nurse I is female and is 31 years old. She studied Nursing for 4 years at the University of Peloponnese. She holds a master's degree on "Primary Health Care". She has been working as a nurse for the last 8 years. In the first years she worked in private clinics in various departments such as: hemodialysis unit, pathology clinic, rehabilitation center.

For the last 4 years she has been working in a Local Primary Health Care Unit (LPHCU), known as TOMY. These units are staffed with multidisciplinary teams of general practitioners, pediatricians, nurses, health visitors, social workers and administrative staff. They work in collaboration with already existing ambulatory care units, health centers that provide specialized, diagnostic and dental health-care services. The LPHCU where she works is staffed by 8 people (1 general practitioner, 1 pediatrician, 1 nurse, 2 health visitors, 1 social worker and 2 administrative employees.

The Covid-19 period significantly affected both her personal and professional life. She says: "*People were hesitant, they didn't come to the unit, they contacted us by phone to get medical advices*", and adds: "*Also, with the start of the vaccinations against Covid-19, I had to leave the unit where I work and move to a vaccination center for about 8 months in order to serve the needs created.*"

Her daily routine work in the Local Primary Health Care Unit includes operations and tasks carried out in these units: injection therapy, taking vital signs, educating patients to take blood pressure and glucose measurement correctly, home visits, updates on treatment programs health.

During the pandemic period due to her move to the vaccination center, she had to be trained in how to prepare and administer the vaccines against Covid-19, while at the same time she was also trained in taking a diagnostic PCR test and rapid test, in which she had not been previously

trained. Regarding the deficits in the training of nurses, Nurse I states that this created significant communication and cooperation problems between employees. During the pandemic, educational and training seminars were held mainly in the field of vaccinations and the correct use of protective measures.

Nurse I says characteristically: *"Continuing professional education is the most basic measure for professionals to provide appropriate care to patients"*, and adds: *"Experience is important, but the science and tools we use are constantly evolving. Specialized seminars and programs with an emphasis on knowledge and technology can help"*.

In closing, she points out that it is important to inform the children through the school vocational orientation course about the nursing profession and its importance in society as a whole. In this direction, educational visits to health structures would help to familiarize the children with this environment.

NURSE II

Nurse II is a woman, 40 years old. She studied 4 years Nursing at the TEI of the University of Thessaly. She has been specialized in "Emergency Nursing and Intensive Care of Patients". She has been working as a nurse since 2017.

For the last 3 years, she has been working as a nurse at the University Hospital of Larissa in the Emergency Department and the Covid Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

The University Hospital of Larissa provides tertiary care and is staffed by a large number of employees such as nurses, auxiliary staff, medical, administrative and paramedical staff. It is on duty day after day and geographically serves the residents of the regions of Thessaly and Central Greece.

The pandemic has significantly affected the work of nurse II. She says characteristically: *"We were called to face something unknown, to use whatever tools and methods we had, to change the working hours. At the Hospital, clinics such as ophthalmology and rheumatology were forced to close and turn into covid clinics. At the same time, the number*

of ICU beds was reduced to develop the Covid ICU. The Covid ICU beds were initially 6 and reached 18”.

Working conditions during the pandemic were difficult and demanding. Nurse II says: *“The nursing staff was not enough, the process of putting on the uniform was time-consuming and difficult as well as working with it, time management was stressful, the cases treated were very serious. Beyond the procedural and human level, the situation was difficult. we came face to face with death every day, while at the same time trying to support and help those who finally made it”.*

The deficiencies she points out in terms of skills concern the ability of nurses to use tools and machines such as those found in ICUs and emergency departments (tracheal tubes, ventilators, monitors. She says: *“The institution I work for responded positively to the purchase of machines and tools that were necessary and also recruited a manpower to meet the needs created, nevertheless staff shortages are still of great importance”.*

Nurse II states about the nursing profession: *“Nurses should inform the community about benefits at all levels of care. Also, with information campaigns in schools and elderly protection can empower the citizens awareness on the prevention and promotion of health and also about the new treatments of the diseases. After all, that's what nurses do, we promote the value of life through our work!”*

NURSE III

Nurse III is a woman, 33 years old. She studied 4 years Nursing at the TEI of the University of Thessaly. She has been working as a nurse since 2018.

For the last 2 years she has been working as a nurse in the Mobile Health Teams of the National Public Health Organization. The health mobiles are funded by the European Union and started their operation during the pandemic. The main role of the nurses working in the mobile health units is to get biological material (PCR, rapid test) testing for Covid -19 and to provide assistance to suspected cases of coronavirus at home. Nationwide, 1,000 health care workers are working for that purpose,

while in the Larissa region where nurse III works, 40 people of various specialties (nurses, drivers, administrative employees) are employed.

National Public Health Organization during the pandemic was asked to develop and promote a series of actions related to Covid-19 such as: epidemiological surveillance, risk assessment and publication of epidemiological data. In this context, the work of nurse III was significantly affected as she reports that there was an increased workload since more actions had to be organized so that all citizens have equal access to Covid-19 testing.

Nurse III says characteristically about her daily work: *"We organize daily actions for free checks on the population to detect covid-19 with rapid test and PCR. We also plan and carry out vaccinations against covid-19 in closed structures (nursing homes, social welfare centers, psychiatric clinics) as well as home vaccinations for bed- bounded patients. We also travel to remote areas to examine or vaccinate people who have no other access."*

According to nurse III, the most important problem in hospitals is the lack of staff. This results in burdening employees with more tasks and ultimately a lack of time and availability for education and training. Says nurse III: *"The lack of motivation such as the scoring of educational programs, the lack of flexibility in the course schedule, the high cost and the small number of programs that meet the real educational needs of employees contribute to the non-acquisition of new skills and abilities."*

To cover the needs during the pandemic, the institution where nurse III works recruited staff and renewed its technological equipment. Also, promoted cooperation with local agencies so that actions can be carried out in many places at the same time and in suitable infrastructures.

According to nurse III, some of the measures that could contribute to reducing the deficits in the skills of health professionals are: the organization of flexible educational programs adapted to the educational needs of the staff, cooperation of health institutions with educational institutions such as the University, targeted incentives for the attraction of health professionals.

Finally, nurse III says about nursing that it should be presented in schools through the school career orientation course but also through proper role models in the mass media.

Summary

What we could observe from the results of the study among health professionals, at first reading, is that there is a general consensus regarding their beliefs about their abilities/skills. Most, evaluating the answers to the questionnaire, claim that they have the skills and can take responsibility to plan, organize, design and evaluate the care provided for people of all age groups in a responsible manner. Also, the majority argues that it can respond to designing communication and consulting in a person and situation oriented approach. Finally, the largest percentage of those who responded to the survey state that they can successfully participate in an interdisciplinary team.

Health professionals, according the results of the survey, value their abilities/skills in the various fields at a fairly high level. Nevertheless, they consider it is necessary to develop new skills in terms of evidence-based practice, new technologies, clinical guidelines for nursing.

As far as the interviews of health professionals are concerned, they have several points in common. The change caused by covid-19 in the daily work of health professionals, even though they serve in different workplaces, is evident in all the interviews. Continuing lifelong learning, developing skills according to needs, creating motivation and also the lack of staff seem to be the biggest problems in the field of nursing today.

Anex

The questions answered by health professionals are as follows:

1. Information about the interviewee:

Please tell me first about your educational and professional background. What level of education do you have and how many years have you been working in your profession and what is your specialty?

2. Working Environment:

Can you briefly describe the health organization, institutions or hospital you work in?

- focus of care
- Size
- number of employees
- relevant organizational aspects etc.

3. How would you describe in a few words how the pandemic has affected institutions organization and your operations?

4. Please describe your day-to-day work. Have any challenges emerged for you in the last years of the Covid Pandemic? If so, please describe these challenges.

5. In addition to the lack of capacity in the hospitals, many professionals complain about deficits in qualifications. Can you agree with this statement? If so, what specific deficits have you identified.

6. Has your organization already responded to deficits with measures, concrete tasks and instruments? If yes, please describe them.

7. Do you have any additional suggestions what specific measures can be introduced to reduce these deficits in qualification of health care specialists? Please give concrete examples.

8. Nursing should profile itself as a modern and attractive occupational field and therefore give it the value it deserves in society. How do you think the population can be in-formed and sensibilized for this demanding and responsible work?