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Knowledge, self-efficacy, beliefs and practices in engaging in physical activity counseling in undergraduate nursing students

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Purpose: To explore knowledge, self-efficacy, beliefs and practices for engaging in physical activity (PA) counseling in undergraduate nursing students.

Theoretical Framework: Bandura's theory of self-efficacy.

Methods: Cross-sectional survey distributed to 603 undergraduate nursing students. The 21-item questionnaire requested information regarding: (1) knowledge of current PA guidelines, (2) self-efficacy in PA counseling, and (3) personal PA beliefs and practices. Responses were analyzed by (1) program level (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) using one-way Analysis of Variance and (2) type of program (traditional, second degree) using the Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test.

Major Findings: 539 students returned completed questionnaires (89%). The majority were females (89.2 %) enrolled in a traditional program (92%). Almost half (48%) responded they would recommend the amount of PA consistent with the current guidelines (≥ 150 min per week). However, less than 40% reported having an opportunity to engage in PA counseling. The majority (74.2%) reported partial to strong confidence in providing PA education. Students ranked providing PA counseling as 4th among 9 other lifestyle behaviors. Senior students reported better knowledge of the current PA guidelines than juniors ($p = 0.02$). Self-efficacy related to PA counseling was significantly lower in freshmen compared to sophomores, juniors, and seniors ($p < 0.001$). Traditional students had lower self-efficacy in PA counseling compared to those in the accelerated program ($p = 0.003$). Freshmen ranked PA higher compared to other lifestyle behaviors (3.9 ± 2.2) compared to juniors (4.8 ± 2.2) and seniors (5.0 ± 2.4) ($p < 0.001$). Sophomores ranked PA higher compared to other lifestyle behaviors (4.1 ± 2.2) compared to seniors (5.0 ± 2.4).

Conclusion: Nursing students infrequently provide PA counseling, potentially due to low self-efficacy.

Implications: Undergraduate curricula may need to incorporate strategies to build competence to deliver PA counseling

Biography

Lu Ann Sowko RN PhD. received her PhD in Exercise Physiology from the University Of Pittsburgh School Of Education. She is an Assistant Professor in The Acute and Tertiary Department of the School of Nursing. She has 15 years of experience in undergraduate teaching in the clinical and classroom setting. Her current interests are physical activity, leadership, interprofessional education and medical surgical nursing. Currently, she is a member of Sigma Theta Tau and AMSN.

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