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Nursing student's attitudes towards nurses' participation in policymaking process

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We present the findings of a cross sectional study aiming to evaluate nursing students' attitudes towards nurses' involvement in health policy issues. Health care systems operate in an ever-changing environment, facing the challenge to adjust policies to evolving knowledge, technological developments, and changing population health needs. Being the mediator between the service and the patients, the World Health Organization emphasizes the contribution of nurses in planning and implementing health policies and reforms. In Israel nurses' baccalaureate as well as graduate programs, allocate but few occasions for students to study policy issues. Moreover, Israeli nurses work within an organizational climate that considers patients' bedside clinical care as nurses' main professional role. In United States, nurses are aware of the importance of being influential. Health policy is being taught and discussed at all levels of nursing curricula. In both countries nurses input to the policymaking is limited. We asked whether students consider nurses in Israel to be active participants in policy development and is it important to society that nurses will be dealing with policy issues. Ninety-eight baccalaureate-nursing students in their last year and nurses in a baccalaureate completion track answered a mixed qualitative, quantitative method. Qualitative data included two open-ended questions. The quantitative part included eighteen statements on a Likert scale questionnaire (Alpha Cronbach 0.79). Majority of the students (72%) answered that nurses should be active in policymaking but only 38% think that nurses are currently involved in political issues. 50% think nurses do not have the knowledge and the time needed for political activity. 30% think that work environment does not encourage nurses to be politically active. Qualitative analysis reveal a tendency to avoid responsibility for decision-making by using the lack of knowledge argument as an important component of reasons students give for avoiding political activity. Findings emphasize the need to include health policy in more learning experiences as a major component of the clinical decision making process.

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