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Patients' perspective towards nurses' characteristics at the Colombo South Teaching Hospital, Kalubowila, Sri Lanka

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Background: Nurses play a vital role in providing health care, as they maintain a close relationship with the patient. The quality of patient care depends on patient satisfaction. Patients' perception regarding nursing care may directly affect the public image of the nursing profession.

Objectives: To assess the patients' perception regarding the characteristics of nurses at the Colombo South Teaching Hospital (CSTH), Kalubowila, Sri Lanka.

Methods: This descriptive cross-sectional study, was carried out on 365 patients from both surgical and medical wards of CSTH who were admitted for at least two days. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of the CSTH. A self-administered questionnaire was used to assess the patients' perspective regarding nurses' characteristics. Each statement of which was measured on a five-point Likert Scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS (version 22).

Results: The response rate was 100%. Of the sample, majority was Sinhalese (91%), married (80%) and 42.5% were educated up to G.C.E. (O/L). Amongst the respondents, 63.8% had stayed >2 days in the hospital. According to the results, most of the patients stated that nurses were kind (93.2%) and polite (91.5%). Further, majority (99%) observed that nurse's uniforms were always clean and tidy while 87% agreed that nurses were pleasant and always with a smile. Furthermore, they were satisfied with nurses' communication skills (84%), identification of patient needs (85%), and the manner in which they spent time with patients (84%). Moreover, this study found that many patients (95%) believed that nurses are efficient and competent in their work. However, nearly 30% felt that nurses fail to respect the family members of patients and 59.5% felt that the family background of the patient affected the manner in which nurses treated their family members. However, only 52.9% of patients had a good perspective towards the overall characteristics of nurses.

Conclusions & recommendations: According to patients' perspective, nurses are kind, polite, pleasant and efficient in working while they often wear clean and tidy uniforms. They are also satisfied with nurses' communication skills, and with the manner in which they spend time with patients. They are also satisfied with their competency in working. However, they are not happy with the attitude nurses treat the member of their family. However, the overall perception among patients towards nurses' characteristics is moderate. Therefore, the study highlights that awareness programmes should be carried out to improve nurses' characteristics.

Key words: patients, perspective, nurses, characteristics