

From judgement to the construction of the nursing ethical competence

Role of initial training and professional experience

KEY WORDS : nursing, ethical competence, initial training, professional experience, autonomy, dilemma, values, patient rights.

ABSTRACT

The evolution of nurse's identity, her ever-growing autonomy, lead the nurse to take her responsibilities in health care and get her to develop ethical reflection on decision-making as to the necessary nursing interventions.

Considering the increasing responsibility with regards to health-care, the initial training of nurses does not appear to prepare sufficiently for complex ethical decision-making.

The present research attempts to understand how the skills are built up throughout the professional life, through on going education, by implementing relevant variables that influence the construction of competence.

The method is based on a questionnaire submitted to a significant sample of students and professional nurses.

The results point out that resolving an ethical dilemma has a direct link with the different levels of skills in moral reasoning and professional experience. Can be described by a gradual inward transfer from oneself towards others, showing an increasing ability to take into account the complexity of the clinical situation and a better grasp of the context.

Initial training seems to have no influence on moral development and students autonomy but leads to a modelling of professionals who hardly take ethical decisions.

The lack of moral sensitiveness makes unclear the identification of ethical problems in practical nursing care.

The effectiveness of the desire to care for others as well as the quality of the relationship with the patient are shown to be crucial to the respect of the right and dignity of the subject.