

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEN'S ROLE IN HEALTH CARE EDUCATION

Prof. Dr. Jana GORIUP
Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Maribor
Maribor- SLOVENIA

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Majda PAJNKIHAR
Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Maribor
Maribor- SLOVENIA

ABSTRACT

Changes in social roles and changes in social thinking in the post-modern society have led to changes in gender structure in certain occupations. Some former exclusively male occupations have now become also available to women - and vice versa. This state has been observed focusing in the field of health care which until recently, has been specifically understood as a women's professional field, in which more and more men are integrated nowadays. Notably, the share of men in nursing has been increasing recently, but an increased enrolment of men in nursing studies can be noted as well. By increasing the proportion of men in typically female profession, it logically comes to a slowdown of drastic changes and the perception of men in nursing. The issue of men in nursing is associated with stereotypes of nurses and stereotypes about male nurses. The widespread stereotype of the nurse - an angel of mercy - is deeply present in our society, as a nurse is seen as the one who first or last offers a caring and gentle hand to the sick, the baby, the injured and the dying. In the history of social relations this role has been understood and practised for a long time as exclusively female. The character of a nurse in the contemporary Slovenian post-modern society no longer coincides with the traditional idea of the roles of men and therefore poses a problem for patients, doctors and even the employees in health care. Patients who are in contact with men employed in health care develop a different relationship towards them with a woman who is a nurse. The relationship is more imbued with humour, based on camaraderie and the physical contact is reduced to an absolute minimum. Doctors prefer to ask them and do not expect (and require even less!) them to cook coffee or open the door for them. In the nursing team male colleagues are treated differently than female colleagues. Most of the differences are observed in the task distribution and the duties, as men are assigned to work where the need for greater physical strength and / or greater technical complexity is evident. For all the reasons above, male nursing is distributed at psychiatry, in emergency rooms and emergency services, while it is less noticeable at the pre-natal department of gynecology and paediatrics.

In a study in which we wanted to clarify some misconceptions rooted in the Slovenian society, especially regarding the "typical female profession of nursing," we analysed the presence of men in nursing – in the field of health care. The study was based on a quantitative methodology from May to the end of June 2012 involving respondents, regular (39%) and part-time (61%) undergraduate students of nursing. Based on empirical data, we found how the respondents, students of the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Maribor, regardless of the study mode, did not detect differences in treatment of students during the study. Nevertheless, the respondents highlighted the notion of a typical feminine trait of nurses' (e.g., kindness, care, tenderness, empathy, warmth) and men's properties (e.g. strength, determination and authoritativeness). Although they estimated, how the respondents, i.e. the study part-time students expressed more devotion and concern towards more masculine features. Such expectations also reflect the perceptions of employees in health care based on gender in the Slovenian post - modern society. The respondents also highlighted high requirements for a good nurse. Her personal qualities are important: highly stressed due diligence, empathy, assertiveness and independence. These properties are the preconditions for the exercising her professional competence. And, last but not least, they are expected- from patients to relatives and members of the nursing and medical

team as well. According to how gender has been surveyed, we can conclude that it does not affect the quality of a good nurse. But at the same time we noted how, in the choice of work conditions, the gender does affect some fields of health care areas, as the respondents marked the emergency room, medical care and psychiatry to be the most masculine while they attributed nursing care in paediatrics, administrative work and gynecology more as a female workforce. This is also confirmed by Evans (2004), who states how the presence of women in psychiatric wards and emergency rooms has been more noticeable than in other areas of health care.

Key Words: Education, health care, men's role, nurse, stereotypes, mass media.