

## Student Nurse-Older Person Communication: A Mini-Ethnography

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### Rationale

There is an increasing ageing population in Western Countries. Most nurses will be involved in caring for older people in the future. Over the last number of years, much has been written about the benefits of effective nurse-patient communication. However, research findings indicate that the quality of nurse-older person communication has been and continues to be poor.

### Objective

The purpose of this study was to ascertain how student nurses communicate with older people. This was considered relevant as today's students are tomorrow's registered nurses and the manner in which they currently communicate may indicate how they will interact with this population in the future.

### Methodology

The chosen methodology for this study was ethnography. The methods of data collection were participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Data was analysed using thematic analysis, the aim of which was to develop categories, themes and concepts about student nurse-older person communication.

### Results

Four themes were identified from the data as follows:

- types of communication (task and non-task)
- modes of communication (verbal and non-verbal)
- factors which either hinder or enhance student-older person communication
- student nurses' approach to communicating with older people (this theme had three categories i.e. student assumptions about how one should communicate with older people, with registered nurses working in the area, and student views on how one should protect oneself emotionally).

### Conclusion

There are a number of recommendations arising from this study. These are:

- Promotion of a person centred approach to the care of the older person.
- Ensure appropriate clinical supervision of student nurse-older person communication by preceptors.
- Increase theoretical input in relation to interpersonal skills and communication theory.
- Facilitate reflective practice whilst students are on clinical practice.
- Regular auditing of clinical placements as suitable learning environments.

### Presented

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