

Is it possible for nursing students to achieve the learning objectives in their hospital clinical training at the outpatient clinic? Experiences from the students

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Background

Within the hospital care in Norway an increasing part of patient care/treatment have been moved from the wards to outpatient clinics. Nurses working in these departments often have expertise that could be important in the clinical training of nurse students.

Summary of work

The aim of this project was to explore if the outpatient clinics is an appropriate learning context for supervised clinical training: Does the nurse students achieve their planned learning objectives?

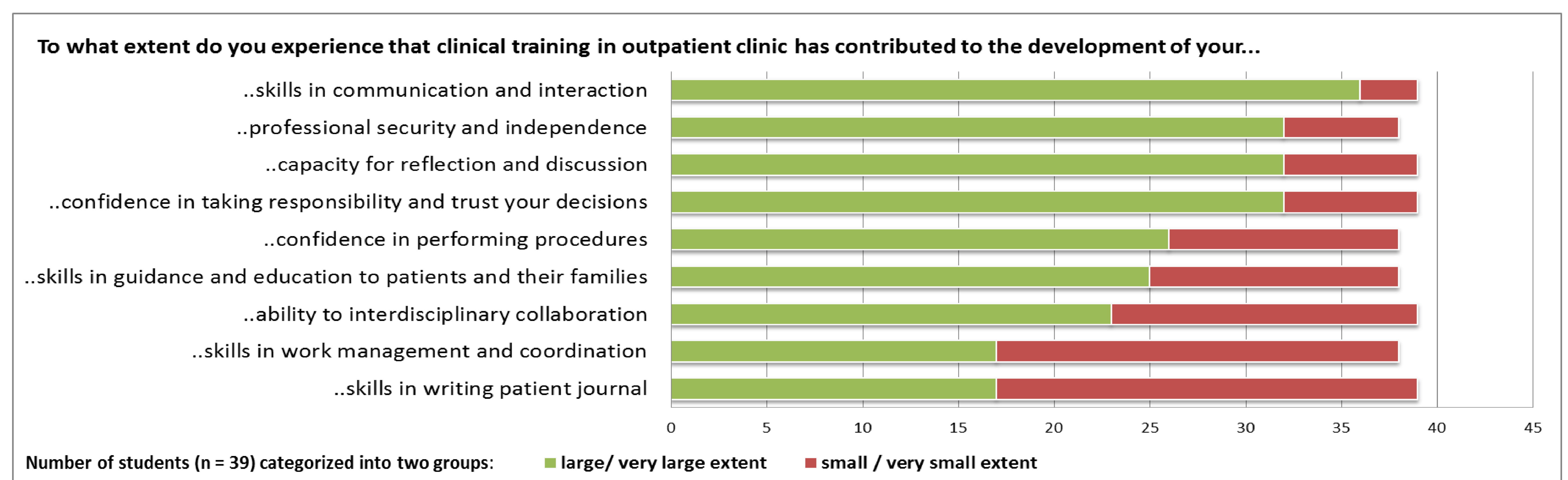
Twelve outpatient clinics and students from three colleges were involved: 38 nursing students completed training for 12 weeks divided between outpatient clinics (6 weeks) and ward (6 weeks) and 13 students had their entire training in outpatient clinics for 6-8 weeks.

Questionnaire were used to collect experiences just after completed training; 39 students (N = 51) responded.

Results

Approximately 2/3 of the students (24) reported that outpatient clinics largely were a suitable arena for learning.

To evaluate if nursing students achieved their learning objectives in the outpatient clinics the students got specific questions regarding if the clinical training had contributed to the development of some defined objectives in the categories of knowledge, attitudes and skills:



Response to open questions in the questionnaire highlighted that adequate student supervision supports learning. Poor preparation and lack of relevance in learning objectives, inhibits learning. Comments in the questionnaire also show that brief patient contact in outpatient clinics may be challenging to the students.

Student comments:

"The outpatient clinic is certainly a arena for practical learning, but it requires that the teacher and the nurses are well prepared and in advance clearly conveys what is the possible learning objectives in the clinic."



Student comments:

"Clinical training in an outpatient clinic has given me a new perspective on being a patient: a lot of the patients are young people, they are not in a hospital bed and some don't look if they have a disease."

Conclusions and take home message

Outpatient clinics are suitable arenas for clinical training for nursing students and many of their learning objectives can be achieved in these units.

Key criteria to succeed:

- Students must be well prepared and there should be lessons of what is distinctive tasks for nurses in outpatient clinics, ahead of their practical training,
- During the clinical training adequate supervising and professional reflections has to be facilitated.
- When the total learning outcome for clinical practice is to be assessed it must be emphasized that training in the wards and in the outpatient departments complement each other.

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