THE ROLE OF THE EMERGENCY NURSE WITHIN THE PREHOSPITAL ENVIRONMENT AND THE EMERGENCY ROOM

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in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Science in Nursing

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DECLARATION

I, Jasmin Gassiep, declare that this research report is my own work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Science (Nursing) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other University.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

To all the emergency nurses who went before. Your dedication to the development of this speciality has been recognised. To the emergency nurses who identified and pursued solutions for the problems identified in this research, we will continue your noble endeavours. To all the respondents I thank you for the privilege of sharing this enlightening experience.

PRESENTATIONS ARISING FROM THIS STUDY

An oral presentation entitled “The light by which we walk” was presented at an international conference. This was done as an invited speaker to the COPICON conference that was held in July 2005 at Sun City.

An oral presentation entitled “The light by which we walk” was presented at an international conference. This was done as an invited speaker to the University of the Witwatersrand conference that was held in August 2005 in Sandton.

An oral presentation entitled “The Role of the Emergency Nurse” was presented at a Trauma Society Of South Africa Update in October 2005 at the University of the Witwatersrand.

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My family, for their love, support and encouragement. You were my pillar of strength and gave me the confidence to pursue my goals despite all our difficulties.

ABSTRACT

Currently the role of the Emergency Nurse in South Africa is not clearly defined. Nursing legislation does not effectively guide these nurses to enable them to cope with the high expectations and increasing demands for emergency care. Nor does it provide adequate legislative protection especially with regard to the responsibilities within the prehospital environment. This creates role confusion and conflict, which has a negative impact on the patient who requires emergency care, the advanced nurse practitioner and the emergency team.

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The purpose of this research was to explore and describe the role of the South African emergency nurse in the prehospital environment and the emergency room and to formulate an instrument that can be used for policy formation, education, training and evaluation.

The purpose was addressed though an action research process where data was collected in four phases that included both qualitative and quantitative methods. The process involved a group of experts who utilized their expert knowledge, skills and attitudes to explore and describe the phenomena being researched. They confirmed that the environment in which emergency nurses worked included the pre-hospital environment and emergency room. The data/roles identified and analysed were weighted to provide a weighting scale by means of a methodology referred to as " Modelling of Human Judgement". A competency rating was done to provide a three-point competency rating. The data/roles obtained was developed into a questionnaire and sent to the rest of the emergency nurse population for validation and verification.

After validation and verification the information gathered was reduced, organized and with the assistance of a statistician (throughout all the phases) the data was analysed and an instrument developed for use as a policy framework for e.g. a scope of practice and unit standards. The instrument was quantified for educational and evaluation purposes. The instruments can be used to develop high levels of competency to encourage interdependent and autonomous decision-making, which is based on the knowledge of role expectations and sound professional decision making, which in turn is supported by appropriate legislation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER TWO

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES