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Breast cancer prevention: The knowledge and skills of final-year undergraduate nursing students

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ABSTRACT

A quantitative research study in the form of a descriptive survey was undertaken with the aim of determining the level of knowledge and skills of final-year undergraduate nursing students relating to breast cancer prevention. The research objectives were as follows: to determine the awareness of, and orientation toward breast cancer preventative measures of final-year undergraduate nursing students; to determine the level of knowledge regarding breast cancer prevention of final-year undergraduate nursing students; to assess their psychomotor skills in performing a clinical breast examination; and to identify critical knowledge and skill deficits, with regard to breast cancer prevention. Data were collected from a sample of final-year undergraduate nursing students (n=62) from three universities in Gauteng. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data relating to theoretical knowledge. Direct, structured observation, using a self-compiled checklist, enabled the collection of data relating to psychomotor skills in clinical breast examinations. Data analysis was done with the aid of two computer software packages, namely MoonStats and Microsoft Excel. The findings of the research revealed that, although the students were positively orientated to the issue of breast cancer prevention, their theoretical knowledge regarding it was not largely below the level that would deem them competent. The mean score for theoretical knowledge regarding breast cancer prevention was 56%. In addition, the scores for their psychomotor skills in carrying out a clinical breast examination were generally poor. The mean score in this component of the study was 45%. Major theoretical and skill deficits were identified from the findings of the study.

Recommendations proposed comprehensive educational coverage of breast cancer prevention in nursing curricula. It was suggested that nursing students become more actively involved in the promotion of breast cancer prevention in underserved communities. Furthermore it is suggested that nurses and nursing students become more involved in ongoing research in the field of breast cancer prevention.