

Introduction

Increased complexity of health care environments, there has been an identified need to provide clinical experiences that assist nursing students and graduates to make the transition to work setting with more realistic expectations and maximal preparations (**Mills, et al., 2000**). Clinical nursing education underwent revolutionary changes during the twenty century. Changes from apprentice training to faculty responsibility; from free labor work to educational accountability; and from the teacher's authority role to students claiming rights have all affected clinical nursing education, particularly the teacher's role. (**Tang, et al., 2005**)

Nursing education has evolved substantially in the last few decades. While pre-registration nursing education aims to prepare knowledgeable, competent practitioners (**Gidman, 2001**) through transmission of nursing knowledge and assisting nursing students to acquire the necessary skills and attitudes associated with nursing practice. The clinical curriculum provides experiences designed to prepare students with skills in knowledge acquisition, creative thinking, and a commitment to life-long learning. Clinical education also gives the students opportunities to apply the concepts, knowledge and skills introduced in the classroom to patient care situations (**Salsali, 2005**), while fostering problem solving, decision making, and critical thinking. (**Gaberson, and Oermann, 1999**)

Clinical teaching is a part of everyday life for nurses, yet nurses are rarely taught to teach. Relying on natural talent and intuition to impart knowledge to the next generation of nurses may not be sufficient. Formal training in clinical teaching may be desirable if a clinician wishes to be an effective clinical trainer. (**Molodysky, et al., 2006**)

In the clinical-education setting, students practice and develop psychomotor skills and incorporate the attitudes, values, and beliefs of professional practice. A key component of student development in the clinical setting is the quality of the clinical instruction. **(Lauber, et al., 2003)**. Quality clinical instruction is important to facilitate student learning of cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains fundamental to clinical practice. Clinical trainers are essential members of the nursing program's teaching staff; no program could exist without them. **(Fitzpatrick, 2004; Steves, 2005 and Kelly, 2007)**

The clinical trainers played a major role in promoting a positive clinical learning environment by improving the factors through such interventions as creating rapport between students and staff, by fostering mutual respect, and by honoring unit procedures **(Beitz, and Wieland, 2005)**. These individuals must be both practitioners and teachers who guide, show, enhance, promote, direct, communicate, manage, plan, develop, and facilitate students' learning while demonstrating clinical competence. **(Luber, et al., 2003; Billings and Hallested, 2005)**

Through active, teacher-student centered learning to awaken learning in their students, to effectively perform such roles; the teacher must be having professional clinical competence, interpersonal and personal characteristics, teaching and evaluation ability are all required of the clinical trainers in nursing education. **(Harden, and Crosby, 2000)**

Each clinical trainer may be more active in one or more of the above mentioned characteristics according to his/her abilities, capacities, personal interests, different conditions and organizational needs, yet teaching is one of his/her major tasks, the quality of which has an enormous effect on elevating both the students' and the teacher's motivation, innovation, wittiness and effectiveness. **(Zohoor, and Eslaminejad, 2004)**.

Various studies have prioritized the effective clinical trainers' characteristics differently. Some studies consider professional competence to be the most important attribute (**Johnsen, and Aasgaard, 1999 and Nahas, et al., 1999**), while others put interpersonal relationships first. Regardless, almost all of the research indicates that these characteristics are necessary to be successful clinical trainer. (**Hartland, and Londoner, 1997 and Johnsen, et al., 2002**)

Significance of the study

Clinical trainers serve an important role in the facilitation and integration of nursing students' knowledge and skills thus it is important to identify and promote helpful clinical trainers qualities. (**Lurent, and Weidnert, 2001**)

Additionally identifying the characteristics of the effective clinical trainers provides basis for teaching students and nurses in the clinical setting. (**Oermann, 1996**), it is important for the continued development of current faculty, orientation of new faculty, and preparation of future nurse educators and is critical for improving the quality of clinical education. Knowledge of student ratings of behaviors reflecting effective clinical teaching also may be used in faculty appraisals for tenure, promotion, and merit, and may lead to growth and development of faculty. Students' ratings also provide data to support the high faculty costs associated with small groups of students. (**Gaberson and Oermann, 1999; Gignac-Caille and Oermann, 2001**). Accordingly the present study was concerned with characteristics of the effective clinical trainer.
