Quality in practice of oral care

Abstract

Background: Nurse students have their 16 weeks of practice the second year in the community health system, 8 (240 hours) weeks in nursing care homes and 8 (240 hours) weeks in home care. They are supervised by nurses in practice. Nursing teachers follow them up in three meetings during their practice period of 8 weeks. Experiences shows that the students learn different things and procedures in practice. The quality of practice is varying from practice to practice. We wanted therefore (me as a teacher and 6 of my students) to concentrate of how one procedure was handled in practice in one community in Northern Norway. The plan was also that students should learn to understand and to use methods in practice.

Aim/objects: How do health personnel practice caring of the patients oral care?

Methods: Observation of the practice, statistical examinations and qualitative interviews with 6 nurses.

Results: The students learned to use different methods to examinations and interviews in practice. They found that the practice of oral care differed very much. The patients oral care was taken care of in different ways especially when they compared the care in the home care settings to the caring in nursing care homes. The nurses who were interviewed explained in different ways how the procedure should be done. The whole study was presented by the students to the nurses in the community and resulted in more focus on the quality of health care, especially oral care.

Discussions: The oral care procedure is taken care of every day by nurses but in different ways. For the patients it can be crucial for their health if oral care is taken care of in a bad way, or if its missing. Students who are learning in practice needs to learn what to do in the right way. Because of their focus on this procedure the nurses and health personnel were more focused on this procedure and learned more. The students themselves learned more about science methods too.

Conclusion/implications: To focus on how procedures in practice are practiced there can be a better cooperation between practice and school. The students learn to understand science in practice and the nurses in practice learn from their students how to be attentive of the quality of practice and science in practice.

Key words: nurse students, oral care, practice, learning