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Student Attitudes toward their Role as Patient Advocate

Jacquie Graven
Illinois Wesleyan University

Charla Renner, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

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STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD THEIR ROLE AS PATIENT ADVOCATE

Jacquie Graven, School of Nursing, IWU, Charla Renner*

Patient advocacy is a role which has been identified as an important one for nurses. Numerous definitions, models, opinions and philosophical justification of advocacy as a nursing role are described in the literature. The importance of this role is obvious when considering the philosophical dimensions of advocacy. It has been suggested that the concept of advocacy may be the fundamental or theoretical foundation of nursing (Donahue, 1985; Gadow, 1980). Although the role has been discussed for many years there are few established guidelines for implementation and little research exists regarding the advocacy role.

The purpose of this descriptive study is to 1) identify opinions of students toward their role as patient advocate at different levels in their educational process, 2) compare these opinions with those of registered nurses previously surveyed (Renner, 1987).

A convenience sample of generic Illinois Wesleyan University baccalaureate nursing students (n=77) who were at the sophomore, junior and senior levels were surveyed; included in the sample were the 1990 graduates (n=25) for a sample of 102. Opinions toward advocacy were measured by the Nurse Advocate Opinion Scale (Renner, 1982). This instrument consists of 33 items about the advocacy role and were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Validity of the instrument has been well established with reliability indicated by Cronbach's alpha of .75. Study participants were also asked to identify ways which would help improve their advocacy role development. The instrument was administered in a classroom setting to the sophomores, juniors and senior nursing students while the graduate nurses were surveyed by mail. The mailed response rate was 81% while the student participation rate was 99%.

Data analysis using descriptive statistics identified a number of items which were strongly agreed upon as well as items which had widely varied levels of agreement. Analysis of responses to the open ended question suggested teaching-learning methods for advocacy role development.