

Development and validation of a competency assessment tool: care of the patient with intellectual disabilities by adult trained nurses.

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Individuals who have intellectual disabilities experience higher rates of physical and mental health problems than the general population with substantial evidence that access of marginalised groups to healthcare is problematic. People with intellectual disabilities are treated within normal health services in the United Kingdom which is often unsatisfactory in terms of both access and delivery of high quality care. High quality nursing care for people with intellectual disabilities depends on a competent workforce that engages in continuous development. The need for a competency assessment tool for nurses working in acute hospital settings was highlighted.

Design

A psychometric approach was utilised to develop and test a competency assessment tool which comprised three phases.

Method

Phase 1: Item identification using a literature review.

Phase 2: Individual interviews and focus groups with adult nurses and learning disability trained nurses and other healthcare professionals (n=20), parent carers who were also nurses (n=5), people with intellectual disabilities (n=8) and an advocate (n=1). This was followed by the refinement of draft scale and establishing face and content validity testing using an expert panel.

Phase 3: Testing of the draft scale using a postal survey of adult trained nurses from **a variety of acute clinical areas (n=120).**

Results

The data from the different study phases informed tool refinement. The validity and reliability of the tool was confirmed through testing.

Conclusion

The study provides an example of how a robust competency assessment tool may be developed for adult trained nurses in a specialist area of practice and simultaneously be used to engage the nursing workforce in continuing professional development.