

How the nursing educational programme of the University of Athens affects students’ attitudes toward older people

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Introduction: Demographic changes and health care problems create new enlarged roles for nurses in order for them to respond to the needs of older people. Attitudes of nurses seem to affect the preference of working with older people and the quality of care provided to them. Several studies state how education affects attitude. The hypothesis was that nursing educational programme of the University of Athens affects positively the attitudes and knowledge of nursing students.

Methods and Materials: A two wave longitudinal study (2 years apart) conducted. Nursing students (N=175, mean age=20.95 at second wave) completed a self-report questionnaire that included demographic questions and the Kogan’s Old People Attitude Scale before and after their studies. ANOVA and Linear regression analysis were used.

Results indicated that students who did not undertake the elective course of gerontology nursing presented a less favourable disposition toward older people, whereas nursing students who have taken gerontology nursing showed more favourable attitudes towards them. Furthermore, students who did not follow the elective course of gerontology nursing had more misconceptions about older people than those who followed it.

Conclusion: This study points out that further gerontology courses aiming to increase the nursing students’ knowledge about ageing and older people’s care could improve students’ attitudes toward older people, motivate them to prefer working with them and thus, increase the quality of care offered.