

“Towards the specialist horizon”: the experience of an educational programme to support newly recruited nurses in the Intensive Care Unit during the pre-specialisation period

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Background

Intensive care units (ICUs) in Switzerland have a high demand of nurses and an increase in early leaving. Newly recruited nurses (NRN) experience high stress due to the role change and responsibility, along with being involved in education and development of specific skills, contributing to early drop-outs. The designing of an educational programme (EP) to accompany NRN in ICU during the pre-specialisation period may represent an intervention focused at their integration. The aim is to explore the impact of the EP on the integration of NRN through professionals' experiences.

Methods

The EP's development phases are: (1) Identification of the institution's needs regarding the introduction of NRN in ICU (2016) and creation of a workgroup that designed the pre-specialisation EP (fig.1). (2) Development of modular EP of at least 6 months, consisting of: 15-day introduction in ICU with a 2:1 nurse-patient ratio; 56-hour theoretical training with exercise of technical-disciplinary and procedural fundamentals (mixed teaching and simulations); 8-hour bedside mentoring monthly with a dedicated tutor, including self-awareness exercises, on-going evaluations and determination of the employee's suitability for specialisation. (3) Implementation at the Ente Ospedaliero Cantonale ICUs between 2016 and 2022, involving 81 nurses. (4) A focus group involving educators, head nurses, tutors and students who have experienced the EP.

Results

Ten people participated in the focus group, including 2 heads nurses, 3 tutors, 3 ex-students and 2 educators (Table 1). 14 themes emerged, grouped into 3 major themes: EP's experience in ICU, impact of the EP and facilitating/hindering elements to the implementation (Table 2). The participants recognised the positive impact of the EP, defined as structured and individualised, on the acquisition of specialised and meta skills, promotion of quality and safety of care, success in specialisation and strengthens the new employee's decision to work in the ICU. The tutor's mentoring is considered valuable for bedside learning. Factors like teamwork, resources/mentoring planning, communication, leadership and learning culture emerged as both facilitating and hindering factors.

Table 2: Thematic analysis

Major themes	Themes
EP's experience in ICU	Aligning the pedagogical approach Change of role of the newly recruited nurse Experiences and emotion Responding to the needs of the context
Impact of the EP	Induction of the newly recruited nurse Tutor-student mentoring Development of specialised competence areas and metacompetencies Quality of care and patient safety
Facilitating/hindering elements to the implementation	Course of specialisation and professional development Teamwork Resources and mentoring planning Communication Leadership



Conclusion

A pre-specialisation EP decreases the stress of the NRN and promotes integration in ICU, success in specialisation and staff retention. In our context all NRN have completed the specialisation, highlighting that a continuous adaptation of the EP to the context's needs is paramount.

References:

Elias, C.E., Day, T. (2020). Experience of Newly Qualified Nurses in Critical Care: A qualitative systematic review. *Journal of the intensive care society*.
Ramirez-Elvira, S. et al. (2021). Prevalence, risk factors and burnout levels in intensive care unit nurses. A systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of environmental research and public health*.



Fig 1: Educational program's key points

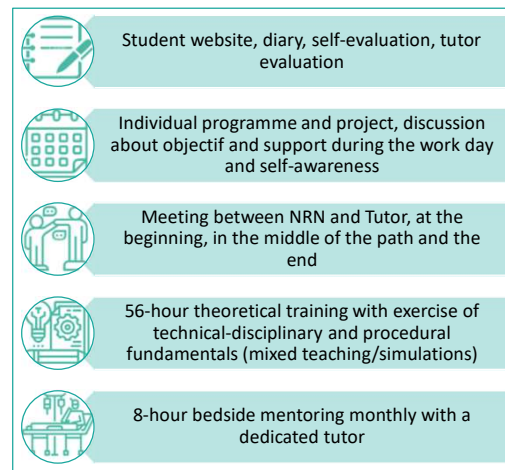


Table 1: Participants characteristics (N=10)

Gender		Professional role	
Male	4 (40%)	Students	3 (30%)
Female	6 (60%)	Tutors	3 (30%)
Age		Head nurses	2 (20%)
21-30	2 (20%)	Educators	2 (20%)
31-40	2 (20%)		
41-50	2 (20%)		
51-60	4 (40%)		



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