**1**

**1- Define critical thinking and evidence-based practice.**

 Dean (2022) defines critical thinking in nursing as “the ability to apply the nursing process effectively and purposefully to an identified problem”. Critical thinking is a process of analyzing a problem, information, or situation in a systematic approach. It involves considering alternative perspectives, explanations, and ideas evaluating them, and making reasoned information using multiple resources. It empowers nurses with problem-solving and decision-making skills, leading to positive outcomes. Critical thinking promotes evidence-based practices by understanding situations and problems deeply resulting in well-informed conclusions. (Dean et al., 2022)

**2- Discuss what critical thinking in nursing practice entails and explain why it is important.**

 The nursing field can be challenging, nurses face different and multiple problems every day, This raises the need to acquire critical thinking skills to help identify problems quickly and solve them accordingly, resulting in better patient outcomes. Critical thinking in nursing involves proficiency in using different explanations, gathering information precisely, identifying potential complications or problems, and deciding the best intervention to prevent them accordingly using clinical judgment.

Critical thinking is an essential process for safe and skillful nursing practice. It helps nurses foresee potential adverse effects, anticipate errors, and prevent them by taking the right measures ahead. Critical thinking promotes continuous learning by encouraging nurses to search for new knowledge and EBP constantly. It also focuses on providing Patient-Centered Care by respecting and acknowledging patients' beliefs, values, and choices, and working on personalized nursing care plans and interventions. Finally, Critical thinking ensures effective communication among patients, families, nurses, and other team members. (Faubion,2023)

**3- Discuss roles of critical thinking and evidence-based practice as they relate to client outcomes.**

According to Chien EBP and critical thinking work along in promoting health and decision-making. EBP evolves in integrating the findings of scientific research and expertise, ensuring the nursing practice and decisions are based on evidence and clinical research rather than customs and traditions, to help provide the most effective and valuable intervention to patients. (Chien,2019)The combination of EBP and critical thinking guarantees that nurses provide the most efficient care resulting in the best patient outcomes. Critical thinking and EBP advance clinical judgment skills and emphasize monitoring the effectiveness of nursing care interventions assessing patient progress and making needed changes.

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**Definition of Critical Thinking & Evidence-Based Practice**

Critical thinking is defined as “the ability to apply the nursing process effectively and purposefully to an identified problem” (Dean et al., 2022, p.84). It analyzes information, concepts, situations, or problems professionally while making sound clinical judgments. Some key components of critical thinking include “problem recognition, prioritization, clinical decision-making, clinical implementation, and reflection” (Kluwer, 2019).

Evidence-based practice is “using the best available evidence for decision-making and providing efficient and effective care for patients on a scientific basis” (Li et al., 2019). Evidence-based practice integrates “clinical expertise, best research evidence, and patient values/preferences” (Dean et al., 2022, p.59). Ultimately, it is a holistic and patient-centered approach while maintaining patient safety. Some examples of EBP include using oxygen to help with hypoxia managing angina, recognizing the family’s involvement in the patient’s care, etc (ANA, 2023).

**Importance of Critical Thinking**

Developing critical thinking skills is a core part of the nursing curriculum in ADN programs as it is critical to providing safe patient care. During clinical rotations, nursing instructors help build students’ critical thinking abilities by asking the students questions to get their thinking caps going. Critical thinking is crucial for the following reasons:

1. Patient safety: Nurses must think critically to determine priority in seeing patients as well as which medications to administer first. As nursing is dynamic, it is vital that nurses continuously evaluate and re-evaluate the patients’ conditions (Morris, 2023)
2. Effective care: Nurses must think critically as each patient has his/her unique diagnosis that requires tailored interventions (Morris, 2023). For example, the nurse must complete an assessment to gather subjective and objective data before an appropriate nursing problem and nursing care plan can be made.

Critical thinking is so essential that even NCLEX is emphasizing it. NCLEX has changed its exam content to include answering questions based on presented clinical case studies. This updated exam is known as NextGen (NGN) NCLEX.

**Role of critical thinking and evidence-based practice as they relate to client outcomes**

Critical thinking and evidence-based practice are interdependent of each other and have a significant impact on client outcomes in nursing. Critical thinking skills are powerfully honed during the ADN program which helps prepare graduates ready to learn about evidence-based practices. When used together, critical thinking and evidence-based practices can offer positive outcomes to patients. Below are the impacts of critical thinking and EBP on patient outcomes:

1. Patient-centered care: EBP fosters a patient-centered approach, leading to increased satisfaction and improved medication/treatment compliance rate
2. Individualized care plans: Critical thinking helps nurses develop an appropriate nursing problem and tailored interventions. EBP ensures that the interventions are scientifically proven to be effective
3. Increased patient safety: nurses who critically think to evaluate information while using EBP guidelines to reduce adverse events

3

CRITICIAL THINKING

Critical thinking is one of the highly essential skill set which is strongly connected with patient safety, and with the enhancement of nurses’ professional capability. As succinctly defined by ( Falcó-Pegueroles, A.; et al, 2020), “critical thinking is a complex, dynamic process formed by attitudes and strategic skills, with the aim of achieving a specific goal or objective.

                                                                          EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

Evidence-based practice (EBP) may be defined as “the practice of delivering exceptional patient-centered care by understanding and transitioning the best scientific evidence into practice and combining that knowledge with clinical expertise and patient values and wish",  (Ramage, B.; &Foran, P., 2023).

                                                            CRITICAL THINKING IN NURSING PRACTICE

Nursing is largely, a practical discipline which has it’s main focus on the identification and treatment of human responses to achieve the maximum adaptation and/or independence of the individual in relation to their health.  This therefore necessitates the need to develop certain abilities that ensure good decision-making. Critical thinking is one such ability. According to (Falco-Pengueroles, A.; et al, 2020), “critical thinking is characterized as being organized, structured, and specific, inquisitive about the intentions, facts and reasons behind an idea or action, and involves formulating questions to gain a deeper understanding of what is happening and why”.

As  patient-related problems nurses face require a system for solving them which is quite different from other theoretical disciplines, attitudes and virtues must be developed in order to think critically and make decisions. Falco-Pengueroles, A.; et al., (2020), further listed the attitudes and virtues of critical thinking in nursing practice. These are “self-confidence, a broad contextual perspective, creativity, flexibility and the ability to make decisions in the face of ambiguity, inquisitiveness, humility and intellectual honesty, intellectual integrity and independent thinking, intuition, impartiality, perseverance, logical reasoning, and reflection”. Acquisition of these virtues enhance a nurse’s cognitive process which requires one to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant information, generate and evaluate possible solutions or strategies and weigh up their advantages and disadvantages.

                 ROLE OF CRITICAL THINKING AND EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE AS THEY RELATE TO CLIENT OUTCOME

“Evidence based practice (EBP) is known to enhance patient outcomes, embed a culture of safety and decrease overall health care costs”, (Ramage, B.; &Foran, P., 2023). As articulated by McIntosh, K.; et al.,(2022),evidence-based nursing when successfully practiced within a supportive culture, yields the highest quality of care and optimal patient outcomes. They further stated that organization that regards evidence based practice culture, acknowledges employee autonomy to consistently question current clinical practice thereby creating a mechanism the evolves care which are adaptable to patients’ needs and enhances their recovery. Critical thinking utilizes EBP and an array of critical thinking skills to make an informed decision on patient’s health status, thereby promoting good patient outcome.

4

**How the Nursing Profession is Viewed by the General Public**

Since 1999, nurses have ranked #1 among the most trusted professions (except 2001 when firefighters won the award in the wake of the 9/11 attacks) according to the Gallup survey (Brenan, 2023).  In this post-pandemic era, nurses are being viewed in an increasingly positive light after acting as the backbone of the war on COVID (Blau, et al. 2022).  Unfortunately, negative perceptions of nurses also infiltrate the public view, for a myriad of reasons.  Nurses can sometimes be seen as sex symbols, subservient, drug seeking, and can suffer from gender stereotypes.

**Factors that Influence the Public’s Perception of Nursing**

**Media influences**:  Nurses are not always portrayed in a positive light in the media.  Nurses can be characterized as victims, drug seekers, subordinates, incompetent, doctors’ assistants, and sex objects.  With the rise in social media- nurse’s personal public accounts are up for scrutiny as well.  When posting aspects of their, totally human, personal life that do not outwardly portray trust, honesty, and ethics, it can affect the public’s view of the profession as a whole (Dean, et al. 2022).  In another aspect of media- is the news coverage of nursing.  This tends to fall heavily on the shortcomings of nurses (when errors are made) and the ever-present nursing shortages. (Ashraf, et al., 2020)

**Cultural influences**:  Cultural norms and biases surrounding healthcare and gender can lead to altered perceptions of nurses.  In cultures where women do not maintain equality with men- the perception and role of the nurse can be negatively impacted, causing unequal access to quality care.  This is not just an international concern, either, considering the melting pot of cultures that reside in the US.

**Personal experience**:  Everyone has had some experience, whether personal or with family members, with nurses in their lives.  If this experience was a positive one, their perception of nursing will also, usually be positive. If they viewed the experience as negative and/or they did not have favorable patient outcomes (from their perspective), they might view nursing in a negative light.

**Lack of clarity of the nurse’s role**:  A general lack of knowledge of the scope of nursing practice, can undermine the public perception.  If the extent of someone’s knowledge regarding nursing is that nurses only give baths, check heart rates, and give out stickers, then they might not necessarily hold nurses in the highest regard.  Whereas, if they understood the complexity of the profession and nurse’s unique roles in many aspects of society, skills, and competencies, then they might have a more favorable perception. (Foster, et al. 2022)

**Ways to Educate the General Public on the Professional Nurse’s Role and Scope of Practice Within a Changing Health Care System**

 The best way to educate the general public is for nurses to be “boots on the ground” in the effort.  Nurses need to use all avenues at their disposal to bring to light the complexities of nursing to the public.  This can be through educational materials, educational channels on TV and the internet, public events, educational curriculum, and social media.  Another approach is by taking managerial positions, political positions, and educator positions.  These put nurses in roles of teaching to the masses and being true changemakers in the industry and society as a whole. (Ashraf, et al., 2020)

**5**

**1- Describe how the nursing profession is viewed by the general public:**

The general public's image of the nursing profession can differ significantly based on elements including cultural settings, personal experiences, societal attitudes, and media. Back in the 1970s in Europe, nursing received negative attention. It was viewed as an act of prostitution rather than a profession. Florence Nightingale succeeded in changing the perception of the public and laid a solid foundation for today’s nursing image. It has since evolved and the public's opinion has positively changed throughout the years. (Dean et al., 2022)

Nowadays, modern nursing is seen as an essential part of today’s society.

It's crucial to remember that opinions about nursing may change over time and may differ across cultures and geographical areas. In addition, media portrayals, individual healthcare experiences, and social attitudes about nursing can affect how the public views it. The public typically has a positive opinion of the nursing profession, which is distinguished by traits like compassion, knowledge, and patient advocacy. (Donelan K.,2018)

**2- Discuss factors that influence the public's perception of nursing:**

Numerous factors, including cultural, socioeconomic, educational, and media-related influences, affect how the general public views nursing. These elements may influence public perceptions of nursing, its function in healthcare, and those who choose to enter the profession. Nowadays, Social media has an enormous impact on the nursing profession's image, for example, Instagram, Facebook, and lately TikTok platform. Nurses need to be professional all the time, as these platforms can affect Nursing's image to the public and can also affect their employment status as well. Nurses and other healthcare professionals have lost their jobs due to social media accounts. (Dean et al., 2022)

**3- Describe ways to educate the general public on the professional nurse's role and scope of nursing within a changing healthcare system:**

Promoting a better awareness of the profession and its significance necessitates educating the general public about the role of the professional nurse and the growing scope of nursing within a changing healthcare system. There are numerous methods to effectively educate the public, such as educational programs, public campaigns, partnerships with the media and TV shows, patient education at healthcare institutions, and online resources.  (Hayward, B. A, 2023)

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 According to this article titled Social Image of Nursing I read, the public was poled in the United States, 50% of the adult population stated that nursing professionals used their critical thinking, intelligence and problem solving skills; and 40% thought that nurses helped or just assisted the medical professionals.  They concluded in this article that  60.5% of the patients did not have any faith in the health advice given by the Nursing staff and perceived that the nursing professionals were just the subordinates of the medical doctors.  The article goes on to state that patients value the nursing staff's kindness and closeness than really their medical knowledge  (López-Verdugo 2021).

     Factors that influence the public's opinion on nursing is that we always hear how medical doctors are doing great things in medicine.  When in reality its not just the MD, it is their team.  Nurses collaborate with the Dr's along with other professional staff and family members in order to make the best plan for the patient.   Its right as a society to not mention everyone, and how the physician gets all the credit.

     Ways to educate the public on the nurse's role and their scope of practice would be to give credit where credit is due.  Nurses are not there just to wipe your butt as everyone believes.  That's the one thing people say to me over and over, oh you're a butt wiper.  Well, no I actually do quite a bit more than just that, a lot of times I dont even have that role, my aid does, I'm doing other important roles to help the patient.

    Other ways to change the public's view is to get more involved with the public.  Through community health fairs, you can reach so many people in your community, share your knowledge on your specialty and educate the public.  It can be through heart disease, diabetes, obesity, smoking, diet, the list can go on.  I volunteer at my church, they run a coop for home school kids, every year I teach a 9-12 classes with middle and high school students.  I teach them about their mouth, gum disease, PH of drinks and their effects on their teeth, smoking, I bring pig lungs in and show them a lung that has smoked and a healthy lung.  We also go over diabetes, heart disease, emergencies like choking, seizures, how to check a pulse and watch for breathing.  In the end we go over CPR for about 3 classes and on the last day we work on manikins and the AED.  I feel like its a great way to get kids interested in medicine and how to stay healthy.

López-Verdugo M, Ponce-Blandón JA, López-Narbona FJ, Romero-Castillo R, Guerra-Martín MD. (2021). Social Image of Nursing. An Integrative Review about a Yet         Unknown Profession. Nurs Rep.