



PROFESSIONAL PROFILE OF NURSING INTERNS FROM THE TEACHING HOSPITAL

PERFIL PROFISSIONAL DOS ESTAGIÁRIOS DE ENFERMAGEM DO HOSPITAL DE ENSINO PERFIL PROFESIONAL DE LOS PASANTES DE ENFERMERÍA DEL HOSPITAL DE ENSEÑANZA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to outline the profile of scholarship holders, nursing technicians who perform their work activities under a high school internship contract, according to their personal and professional characteristics. **Method:** this is a descriptive study with a quantitative approach, carried out in a teaching hospital in the city of Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil, with 105 Nursing high school interns. Data collection was carried out through a questionnaire and they were analyzed using the software SPSS, version 15.0. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), under the Protocol 088/2008. **Results:** a predominance of female individuals was found (85.70%), 59.00% are single, 54.30% didn't said to have children, and 95.23% are scholarship holders with complete high school education. With regard to learning, 70.50% reported to learn from the nursing technicians and all attend specialization or refresher courses, in order to have a connection to the school and be able to get an internship. **Conclusion:** one hundred percent of scholarship holders who get an internship in the hospital have already completed the Nursing technical course in public or private institutions in Natal, depriving them, therefore, from the characteristics of students from professional training courses. One has to take into account that a comprehensive profile of the Nursing high school scholarship holders, including the demographic and professional data, is significant when correlated to the discussions on the precariousness of labor in the world of today. **Descriptors:** work; work force; teaching hospitals; nursing human resources at the hospital.

RESUMO

Objetivo: delinear o perfil dos bolsistas, técnicos de enfermagem que realizam suas atividades laborais mediante um contrato de estágio de nível médio, segundo suas características pessoais e profissionais. **Método:** trata-se de estudo descritivo de abordagem quantitativa, realizado em um hospital de ensino na cidade de Natal-RN, com 105 estagiários de nível médio de Enfermagem. A coleta de dados foi realizada por meio de questionário e eles foram analisados através do programa SPSS, versão 15.0. O estudo foi aprovado pelo Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), sob o Protocolo n. 088/2008. **Resultados:** constatou-se predomínio do sexo feminino (85,70%), 59,00% são solteiros, 54,30% não afirmaram ter filhos e 95,23% são bolsistas com nível médio completo. Quanto à aprendizagem, 70,50% referiram aprender com os técnicos de enfermagem e todos fazem cursos de especialização ou aperfeiçoamento, para ter vínculo com a escola e poder estagiar. **Conclusão:** cem por cento dos bolsistas que estagiam no hospital já concluíram o curso técnico de Enfermagem em instituições públicas ou privadas de Natal, descaracterizando-os, portanto, como estudantes dos cursos de formação profissional. Há de se considerar que um perfil abrangente dos bolsistas de nível médio de Enfermagem, contemplando os dados demográficos e profissionais, é significativo quando correlacionado às discussões da precarização do trabalho no mundo de hoje. **Descritores:** trabalho; força de trabalho; hospitais de ensino; recursos humanos de enfermagem no hospital.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: delinear el perfil de los becarios, técnicos de enfermería que realizan sus actividades laborales bajo un contrato de pasantía de nivel medio, según sus características personales y profesionales. **Método:** esto es un estudio descriptivo con abordaje cuantitativo, realizado en un hospital de enseñanza en la ciudad de Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, Brasil, con 105 pasantes de nivel medio de Enfermería. La recogida de datos fue realizada por medio de un cuestionario y ellos fueron analizados a través del programa SPSS, versión 15.0. El estudio fue aprobado por el Comité de Ética en Investigación de la Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), bajo el Protocolo 088/2008. **Resultados:** se constató un predominio del sexo femenino (85,70%), 59,00% son solteros, 54,30% no afirmaron tener hijos, 95,23% son becarios con la escuela secundaria completa. En cuanto al aprendizaje, 70,50% refirieron aprender con los técnicos de enfermería y todos hacen cursos de especialización o de perfeccionamiento, para tener vínculo con la escuela y poder hacer una pasantía. **Conclusión:** el cien por ciento de los becarios que hacen pasantía en el hospital ya completaron el curso técnico de Enfermería en instituciones públicas o privadas de Natal, privándoles, por lo tanto, de las características de estudiantes de los cursos de formación profesional. Hay que se considerar que un perfil abarcador de los becarios de Enfermería de nivel medio, incluyendo los datos demográficos y profesionales, es significativo cuando se correlaciona a las discusiones acerca de la precariedad del trabajo en el mundo de hoy. **Descriptores:** trabajo; fuerza de trabajo; hospitales de enseñanza; recursos humanos de enfermería en el hospital.

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INTRODUCTION

Internship is aimed at learning the skills of one own's professional practice and curricular contextualization, it may be compulsory or not, according to the guidelines of the level, modality, and area of education and the course pedagogical project. In this context, compulsory internship is that defined as such in the course project, whose number of credit hours is a partial requirement for approval and to obtain the degree. Non-compulsory internship is that developed as an optional activity, included in the regular and obligatory number of credit hours.¹

Regarding the participants of non-compulsory internship, they may receive a monthly stipend to cover part of their school and personal expenses, which shall be paid by the company where the student performs the internship activities or by the Integration Agents (IA), which may even suggest the scholarship value itself.²

In the context of this study, we chose to analyze the profile of high school Nursing interns who got a non-compulsory and paid internship in the University Hospital (UH), defined by Portaria Interministerial 1,006, enacted on May 27 2004, as a setting for health care, a reference service with regard to high complexity, training of health professionals, and technological improvement, in a perspective of inclusion and integration, in a network, in the health care services, in accordance with criteria based on population needs, thus strengthening guidelines from the Brazilian Unique Health System (SUS).

UHs provide a great contribution to a portion of SUS users which seeks for a health care that often is not available in other institutions; these people believe in the quality of care because it's a reference service connected to universities, that is, institutions which train most of the health care professionals.³

Regarding the training of human resources for health, HU is, *par excellence*, one of the practice settings where the teaching/service relationship occurs. As it's a permanent institution of the university itself, it's the setting which provides most of the learning opportunities and experiences for students. These opportunities become available through the work of professor, interns, and professionals performing their occupational activities in the institution.⁴

Thus, in this study the research problem established is: the profile of the high school Nursing interns who perform their

occupational activities as scholarship holders in a UH in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil, considering their personal and professional characteristics.

Knowing this profile will allow the contribution to identify elements which can support the understanding of the reality experienced by high school of nursing professionals, who do not have a job itself at that time, as they are scholarship holders in an educational institution.

One believes that the labor world experienced by the scholarship holders presents actual characteristics of the current precariousness of labor. It's worth emphasizing the importance of this study as a warning to the higher education institution, the Nursing educators, and the professional associations in the area with regard to the need for planning changes in the profile of high school nursing workers, especially focusing on the characteristics of compliance with the legislation on interns.

METHOD

To clarify the issues involved in the proposed problem, a quantitative approach was implemented by means of the descriptive statistical method. This is a survey of information for which a questionnaire was used, with the aim of constituting a self-reported portrait.⁵ The field study was a medium sized university hospital, connected to the public health care system and located in the city of Natal.

The survey was carried out from November 2008 to March 2009. It had the participation of 105 high school Nursing interns, gathered after the establishment of a 5% sampling plan, who met the following inclusion criteria: paid scholarship holders, who were in the hospital at the time of data collection, especially in their work shifts, in the various service sectors: intensive care unit (ICU), surgical center, transplantation sector, hemodynamics sector, the outpatient wards on the ground-floor and the outpatient wards of the mixed sector, including the neurology outpatient unity.

Therefore, we excluded those who, after knowing the survey aims, advantages, and risks, didn't signed the free and informed consent term or weren't paid scholarship holders.

In compliance with the Resolution 196/96, from the Brazilian National Health Council, this investigation was authorized by the direction of the institution under analysis and, afterwards, submitted to the Research Ethics

Committee of Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), which approved it, under the Opinion 270/2008, CAAE 0100.0.051.000-08.

For the study, we selected only single variables, for instance, personal characteristics such as: gender, age group, marital status, number of children, and education; and professional variables, such as: reason for choosing the technical course, year of completion of the Nursing technical course, length of time as scholarship holder in the institution, specialization/refresher courses, learning of scholarship holders during internship and repercussions of the scholarship.

These variables make up the instrument for data collection of the MS dissertation on which this paper is based.⁶ After its application to the research subjects, 105 questionnaires were analyzed, whose information were clearly presented. The data produced were stored in a computer through the software *Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)*, version 15.0. Thus, we obtained, the frequencies of scholarship holders' personal and professional characteristics.

RESULTS

Since it's an outline of MS dissertation, we chose to describe the results presenting the predominance of percentage frequency of the data with regard to the variables selected for the study, highlighting the personal and professional characteristics of the high school Nursing interns from a university hospital.

• Personal characteristics of scholarship holders

Regarding the gender of scholarship holders interviewed, most of them, i.e. 90 (85.70%), were female and 15 (14.30%) were male, confirming that the greater portion of the nursing workforce consists of women. The nursing work is inherently associated to the women's work.⁷

Of the 105 scholarship holders interviewed, there was a predominance of the age group from 20 to 39 years, corresponding to a frequency of 91.43% of the scholarship holders. Most of them, thus, is included in the age group named *young adults*.

Regarding marital status, 62 (59.00%) of respondents reported being single. The percentages presented are in accordance with the condition of young adult, still without a consolidated economic status and with no definition in terms of starting a family. Reflecting on the profile of modern society, one finds out that the concept of family is changing with regard to the need for a stable relationship established through religious or civil marriage.

Concerning the number of children, 57 (54.30%) of respondents reported not having children. This may be related to the amount of single scholarship holders and to the predominance of adult young people.

• Professional characteristics of scholarship holders

Table 1 summarizes the frequency of the variables representing the professional characteristics analyzed in the study.

Table 1. Distribution of professional characteristics of the scholarship holders in the HU. Natal, 2009 (n = 105).

Professional characteristics	n	%
Reason for choosing the technical course	Liking the area	69.5
Year of completion of the Nursing technical course	2005 – 2008	79
Length of time as a scholarship holder in the institution	1 – 6 meses	50.5
Specialization/refresher courses	Urgency and Emergency	16.2
	Occupational Health Nursing	35.2
	Surgical Instrumentation	20
Learning of the scholarship holders during internship	Assistant/nursing technician	70.5
Scholarship value	R\$ 217,00 – R\$ 295,00	100

Source: Survey questionnaire.

The scholarship holders who participated in the study reported liking the field of nursing, which represented 73 (69.50%) of the interviewed population; 32 (30.50%) presented another reason for the choice of this course. Most of respondents completed the Nursing technical course between 2005 and 2008, 83 (79.00%). To get the scholarship in HU, the nursing technician needs to have fulfilled the

volunteer internship for a period of at least three months. Concerning the time of internship, including the period as a volunteer and not volunteer, 38 (36.20%) had from 1 to 6 months; the same percentage was found with regard to the length from 12 to 24 months.

It was also found that the period between 6 and 12 months had 28 (26.70%) people and only one scholarship holder is in the

institution for more than 24 months.

Among the respondents, it was found that the majority, 53 (50.50%), had a time as scholarship holder from 1 to 6 months, characterizing a population of interns with a somewhat short time in the institution.

Regarding the refresher or specialization courses, 37 (35.2%) respondents reported attending the Occupational Health Nursing course, followed by 21 (20.00%) who attend the Surgical Instrumentation course, and 17 (16.20%) who attend courses in Urgency and Emergency and Intensive Care Unit. We also found 13 (12.40%) who reported attending courses in Hemodialysis, Biodiagnosis, and other courses which are undergoing the process of recognition by the Brazilian Education Ministry (MEC).

Concerning the performance of scholarship holders in these refresher or specialization courses, the largest share, 54 (51.40%), reported to be good. This translates to ease of understanding the content covered in the course, and it may be mainly related to the quality of these courses, most of them is offered on weekends, with a low number of credit hours and poor content. According to the scholarship holders, the courses presenting these drawbacks were usually those offered by private institutions, such as Occupational Health Nursing, Urgency and Emergency, and Surgical Instrumentation.

Regarding the ease or difficulty of the study in the refresher or specialization courses, 75 (71.40%) respondents said it's easy to combine it to work, because they need the weekends, two days a week, or the night hours to study. In turn, 26 (24.80%) respondents said they can combine things, but with some difficulty.

When asked about with whom they learned their internship activities, 74 (70.50%) respondents reported learning from nursing technicians. The learning through guidance of nurses was the second in the survey, indicated by 20 (19.00%) respondents.

There was also a percentage of 8.60% which doesn't assign her/his learning during internship to nursing technicians, nurses, university students, or health professionals as a whole. This is noteworthy because these nine scholarship holders said that only patients and family members could teach them something.

The high school Nursing intern, as soon as she/he gets a scholarship from the hospital institution, becomes part of the staff and starts receiving a monthly stipend, which was R\$ 217.00 (two hundred and seventeen reais)

before the new Law of Interns. In the institution, this stipend increased to R\$ 295.00 (two hundred and ninety-five reais) in January 2009.

This value which the intern receives for fulfilling her/his activities is primarily used for the payment of specialization or refresher courses.

When asked whether the scholarship helped the continuity of their studies, 71 (67.60%) said yes, because this value actually had the purpose to fund the studies. However, 34 (32.40%) said that the scholarship did not help the continuity of their studies, as they are required to attend these courses.

DISCUSSION

In the case of the health care sector, in general, one should take into account that the health care workforce has been undergoing a process of feminization, i.e. an increased participation of women, bringing along the historical, social and economic determinations from this phenomenon, leading, thereby, to a double work shift.⁷

When analyzing the percentage of scholarship holders with regard to their age groups, one notices the occurrence of predominant percentages of 24% in two of them, from 23 to 26 years and from 27 to 30 years, characterizing the largest share of respondents, 48%, as people aged between 23 and 30 years. This age group shows the demand for paid internships at the Nursing high school technical level from a significant proportion of young adults. This indicates a search for insertion into the labor market by an age group which has a high percentage of unemployment in Brazil.⁸ This proportion of scholarship funded interns of the teaching hospital corroborates what is estimated by the Report on Global Employment Trends for Youth 2010, i.e. from about 620 million economically active young people aged between 15 and 24 years, 81 million were unemployed at the end of 2009, the highest number ever registered.⁸

In Brazil, the unemployment of 3.5 million young people aged between 16 and 24 years corresponds to 45% of the national workforce in this group, something which reinforces the concern of the International Labour Organization (ILO) with regard to youth employment. The big questions, even at best, are whether there will be enough job opportunities to this entire workforce and whether these jobs will be productive and decent, considering that 93% of them currently available for this group are in the

informal economy, with low wages and little or no safety.⁸

Regarding the number of children, one finds out an influence of the failure to be included in the formal labor market, since the employment relationship can contribute to increase the number of children in families. As the relation of scholarship holders involves an internship and not an employment, during the contract period, the female students can't get pregnant, because there is no possibility to take a maternity leave; the decreased conditions of labor implies the lack of occupational rights equal to those of a formal worker.

The reasons pointed out for the choice of the Nursing technical course were related to previous experiences with hospitalized family members or undergoing home care, but also the existence of relatives and friends who are nursing technicians and encouraged this choice.

It was found that paid interns had completed their course much longer than the prevailing percentage. This may indicate a greater inclusion of nursing technicians in the labor market, because the paid internship has an average time of four years.

This is mainly related to the various types of unemployment manifestations seen in the world, as a significant part of the nursing technicians doesn't find a job after the completion of a course. The current unemployment manifestations indicate that a surplus of workforce has been constant throughout the history of market economies and that, in a situation of structural and mass unemployment, there's an increased selectivity in hiring, leading to an unequal access to jobs in a large escape.⁹

This fact draws attention, because this percentage is related to new scholarship holders who replaced those who had contracts for almost 24 months. This occurred mainly after the promulgation of the new Law of Interns, Law 11,788, enacted on September 25, 2008.

The opinion of the Resolution 04/99, from the National Council of Education/Coordination of Basic Education (CNE/CEB), indicates that high school technical education also includes the courses or additional modules for specialization, improvement, and upgrading of personnel already qualified or entitled at this level of professional education. These courses represent ways to supplement one own's qualification closely related to the demands and tendencies of the labor market.¹⁰

The performance of activities by the student, within the period of the scholarship, constitutes an important event in her/his training and prepares her/him for the professional practice. The grant assistance may be seen as a significant experience when its purpose is to instigate the grant holder to search for a comprehensive, humanized, critical, and reflective.¹¹

It is noteworthy that the Opinion 16/99, concerning the national curriculum guidelines for professional education at the high school technical level, adds that high school technical education also includes courses or additional modules for specialization, improvement, and upgrading of personnel already qualified or entitled at this level of professional education.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

Regarding personal characteristics, the study revealed that there is a predominance of female individuals, with 85.70% of the scholarship holders surveyed, something which confirms the portion of the nursing work performed by women. Another important finding relates to age, because 91.43% of individuals are aged between 20 and 39 years, being characterized as young adults.

In the study, it was found that 100% of scholarship holders who are interns in the hospital completed the Nursing technical course in public or private institutions of Natal, therefore, they may not be regarded as professional education students.

One concludes through this research that a comprehensive profile of the high school Nursing technician interns was outlined, including demographic and professional data, which could be more significant if related to discussions on the precariousness of labor in the world of today, the daily reference of health workers and nursing.

Therefore, one suggests this contextualization for further research, given the small number of studies specifically on interns in the literature.

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