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Anxiety levels among first year university nursing students on starting clinical practice

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Clinical practice in nursing is a challenging experience for many first-year nursing students. It has been found to cause anxiety among beginning students resulting in feelings of inadequacy to perform professional nursing skills. Students often express a lack of knowledge and competence to take care of patients in the clinical setting. In Kenya, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) students normally commence clinical practice at the beginning of the second year after successfully completing the basic science courses which are offered in the first year of study. Students in the first year of study are usually referred to as “pre-clinical” at some universities.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of anxiety among pre-clinical nursing students anticipating to begin their clinical practicum. A phenomenological qualitative approach was used in this study. Structured interviews method

was used to obtain data from the selected respondents.

The study population comprised first year nursing students at a private University in Kenya. A qualitative study design was used to sample the thirteen students who participated in the study. Purposive sampling was used until data saturation was achieved. Data from interviews was analyzed thematically.

The results indicate that nursing students experience considerable anxiety when commencing clinical practice. This finding agrees with other studies cited in literature. The anxiety levels could be reduced by counseling, early exposure to the clinical practice environments during the pre-clinical period. There is need for open discussions with students regarding the real-life clinical situations that will be encountered during practice.

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