

ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE OF NURSES FROM THE VOIVODESHIP SPECIALIST HOSPITAL IN RADOM ON LEGAL REGULATIONS IN THE NURSING PROFESSION

OCENA POZIOMU WIEDZY PIELEŃNIAREK WOJEWÓDZKIEGO SZPITALA SPECJALISTYCZNEGO W RADOMIU NA TEMAT PRZEPISÓW PRAWNYCH DOTYCZĄCYCH WYKONYWANIA ZAWODU PIELEŃNIARKI

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. The knowledge of legal regulations in the nursing profession is of essential importance for people actively performing this job.

Aim. The aim of the study was to assess the relation between the level of education and nurses' knowledge of currently effective legal regulations concerning the nursing profession.

Material and methods. The study covered 100 nurses employed in the Voivodeship Specialist Hospital in Radom. 62 respondents had higher education, 23 medium-level education. The mean age of respondents was 37.5 years (min 23, max. 52 years, SD = 6.541). The mean work experience: 17 years. A voluntary and anonymous questionnaire survey study was conducted using a questionnaire of the authors' own design. Statistical analysis: STATISTICA 10.0, nonparametric Mann-Whitney U Test ($p < 0.05$)

Results. No significant influence of the level of education on the knowledge of legal regulations concerning the nursing profession was disclosed in the study group. Nevertheless, statistical significance showing differences between the study groups was found, among others, in questions concerning the date of being awarded the right to perform the profession ($p < 0.014$), the source document regulating professional liability ($p < 0.044$), the scope of bearing professional liability ($p < 0.034$) as well as the body keeping the register of nurses and midwives penalised ($p < 0.052$).

Conclusions. 1. The knowledge of legal acts regulating the performance of the nursing profession among nurses is insufficient and requires to be complemented.

2. The overall knowledge of legal acts regulating the performance of the nursing profession was not dependent on the respondents' level of education though nurses with higher education represented a slightly higher level of knowledge of professional liability.

3. The insufficient knowledge of legal issues concerning the profession practised in the studied group of nurses requires that actions be undertaken to expand this knowledge in the course of various forms of permanent education, pursuant to the principle of life-long education.

KEYWORDS: knowledge, nurses, law, legal, civil, professional liability.

STRESZCZENIE

Wstęp. Znajomość przepisów prawnych dotyczących wykonywania zawodu pielęgniarstwa ma bardzo istotne znaczenie dla osób czynnie wykonujących ten zawód.

Cel. Celem pracy była ocena wiedzy pielęgniarzek na temat aktualnie obowiązujących przepisów prawnych dotyczących wykonywania zawodu pielęgniarstwa w zależności od posiadanego wykształcenia.

Materiał i metody. W badaniach udział wzięło 100 pielęgniarzek zatrudnionych w Wojewódzkim Szpitalu Specjalistycznym w Radomiu, 62 badanych posiadało wykształcenie wyższe, 23 – wykształcenie średnie. Średnia wieku badanych wyniosła 37,5 lat (min. 23, maks. 52 lata, SD=6,541). Średni staż pracy w zawodzie: 17 lat. Przeprowadzono dobrowolne i anonimowe badania ankietowe, autorski kwestionariusz ankiety. Analiza statystyczna: STATISTICA 10.0, nieparametryczny test U Manna-Whitneya ($p < 0,05$).

Wyniki. W badanej grupie nie stwierdzono istotnego wpływu poziomu wykształcenia na stan wiedzy na temat przepisów prawnych dotyczących wykonywania zawodu pielęgniarstwa. Mimo to istotność statystyczną wykazującą różnice pomiędzy badanymi grupami zauważono m.in. w pytaniach dotyczących: terminu wydania praw wykonywania zawodu ($p < 0,014$), dokumentu źródłowego regulującego odpowiedzialność zawodową ($p < 0,044$), zakresu ponoszenia odpowiedzialności zawodowej ($p < 0,034$) oraz organu prowadzącego rejestr ukaranych pielęgniarzek i położnych ($p < 0,052$).

Wnioski. 1. Wiedza pielęgniarzek na temat uregulowań prawnych dotyczących wykonywania zawodu pielęgniarstwa jest niewystarczająca i wymaga uzupełnienia.

2. Ogólna znajomość aktów prawnych regulujących wykonywanie zawodu pielęgniarstwa nie była zależna od poziomu wykształcenia ankietowanych, jednakże nieznacznie wyższym poziomem wiedzy z zakresu odpowiedzialności zawodowej wykazały się pielęgniarzki posiadające wykształcenie wyższe.

3. Niewystarczająca znajomość zagadnień prawnych dotyczących wykonywanego zawodu w badanej grupie pielęgniarzek wymaga podjęcia działań zwiększających tę wiedzę podczas różnych form kształcenia ustawicznego, zgodnie z zasadą kształcenia się przez całe życie.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: wiedza, pielęgniarstwo, prawo, odpowiedzialność prawna, cywilna, zawodowa.

Introduction

Changes in legal regulations concerning the nursing profession were made in Poland after 1989, following systemic changes taking place in the country [1–5].

In 1991 a law on the professional self-government of nurses and midwives was adopted and in 1996 – a law on the profession of a nurse and a midwife [6, 7]. In 2005 regulations were introduced with respect to registers of nurses and midwives, practising the profession in the territory of the Republic of Poland [8, 9], and two years later a decree of the Minister of Health of 7 November 2007 on the type and scope of preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitation services, rendered by the nurse and the midwife on their own without a doctor's order (Journal of Laws No. 210 Item 1540), which had not been amended until then [10, 11, 12].

Since January 2012, the legal status of the profession of the nurse and the midwife has been governed by new laws: the law of 15 July 2011 on the professions of a nurse and a midwife (Journal of Law of 23 August 2011) and the law on the self-government of nurses and midwives of 1 July 2011 (Journal of Laws of 23 August of 2011).

Aim

The aim of the study was to assess the level of nurses' knowledge of current legal regulations concerning the performance of the profession depending on education.

Material

The study covered 100 nurses employed in the Voivodeship Specialist Hospital in Radom. The inclusion criteria were: oral consent to participation in the study and employment on the basis of an employment contract. Women constituted 100% of the respondents. 15 people (15%) with professional specialty were excluded from the study in order to have a study group uniform in terms of education. Finally, the study group consisted of 85 people. 23 nurses (Group 1) had medium-level education (27.05%) while 62 nurses (Group 2) higher education (72.94%). The age of the nurses studied ranged from 23 to 52 years (mean age: 37.5 yrs). The length of professional work of the nurses ranged from 3 months to 32 years (mean length of work: 1 year).

Methods

The voluntary and anonymous questionnaire survey was conducted from November 2012 to January 2013. The study instrument was a survey questionnaire designed by the authors themselves which consisted of 42 closed questions (6 multiple choice questions) and was divided into three parts. The first part concerned the level of general knowledge of the legal regulations applicable to nurses and midwives. In the second part the respondents answered questions concerning the law on the profession of a nurse and a midwife, the law on the professional self-government and the decree of the Minister of Health on the independent provision of

preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitation services by a nurse without a doctor's order. In the third part the respondents were asked to provide self-assessment of their knowledge of legal regulations concerning the performance of the profession.

Statistical analysis of the obtained results

The collected results were subjected to a statistical analysis made in the Division of Teaching and Outcomes of Education at the Faculty of Health Science, Medical University of Warsaw, with the use of the STATISTICA 10.0 programme (MUW license). Two independent groups of nurses, formed depending on the level of education held, were compared. The analyzed data were qualitative, nonparametric and did not have a normal distribution ($p > 0.05$, Shapiro-Wilk Test). The nonparametric Mann-Whitney U Test was used to perform a statistical analysis. The $p < 0.05$ level was adopted as statistically significant.

Results

In the study group, education did not affect the level of nurses' knowledge of the law applicable to the performance of the profession. Statistical significance was found only in the question concerning the date of being awarded the right to perform the profession, which indicated a difference between the study groups ($p < 0.014$). Detailed results are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Knowledge of the right to practise the profession of a nurse in the study group

No.	Question	Answer	Group as a whole	Group 1	Group 2	p
1	What constitutes the condition of being awarded the right to practise the profession?	Certificate or diploma of completing a nursing school	6 (7%)	2 (8%)	4 (7%)	NS
		Full legal capacity	16 (19%)	6 (26%)	10 (16%)	
		State of health allowing to practise the profession	6 (7%)	0 (0%)	6 (10%)	
		Postgraduate internship	53 (62%)	15 (65%)	38 (61%)	
		I do not know	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	4 (7%)	
2	Who awards the right to practise the profession?	Regional Board of Nurses and Midwives	35 (41%)	13 (57%)	22 (35.5%)	NS
		Regional Chamber of Nurses and Midwives	48 (56%)	9 (39%)	39 (63%)	
		Supreme Board of Nurses and Midwives	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.5%)	
		I do not know	1 (1%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	
3	Within what time is the right to practise the profession awarded?	Not later than within 3 months	35 (41%)	16 (70%)	19 (30%)	$p < 0.014$
		Not later than within 1 month	33 (39%)	4 (17%)	29 (47%)	
		Not later than within 14 days	11 (13%)	0 (0%)	11 (18%)	
		I do not know	6 (7%)	3 (13%)	3 (5%)	

4	Can the right to practise the profession expire or be limited?	Yes	83 (98%)	23 (100%)	60 (97%)	NS
		No	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	
		I do not know	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
5	Does the expiration or limitation of the right to practise the profession result in a loss of professional qualifications acquired?	Yes	81 (95%)	21 (91%)	60 (97%)	NS
		No	4 (4%)	2 (8%)	2 (3%)	
		I do not know	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	

Source: authors' study

The majority of respondents knew that the legal act regulating the principles of the professional liability of a nurse was the law on the professional self-government of 1 July 2011. However, education affected the replies given by respondents ($p < 0.044$). Moreover, a significant group of respondents knew that a nurse bore professional liability before a professional court ($p < 0.034$). Detailed results are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Level of knowledge of professional liability among the respondents

No.	Question	Answer	Group as a whole	Group 1	Group 2	p
1	What document specifies the professional liability of nurses?	Code of Professional Ethics of a Nurse and a Midwife	37 (43,5%)	14 (56%)	23 (37%)	$p < 0.044$
		Penal Code	3 (3,5%)	0 (0%)	3 (5%)	
		Law on the Professional Self-government of 15 July 2011	39 (46%)	8 (32%)	31 (50%)	
		I do not know	6 (7%)	1 (4%)	5 (8%)	
2	Towards whom do nurses bear professional liability?	the patient	5 (6%)	1 (4%)	4 (6%)	$p < 0,034$
		the employer	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	
		Professional Court of Nurses and Midwives	76 (89,5%)	20 (87%)	56 (90%)	
		I do not know	3 (3,5%)	2 (8%)	1 (2%)	
3	Do proceedings before a professional court exclude initiation of proceedings before the common court?	Yes	7 (8%)	3 (13%)	4 (6%)	NS
		No	70 (82%)	19 (82%)	51 (82%)	
		I do not know	8 (9%)	1 (4%)	7 (11%)	
4	What penalties are foreseen for violating professional liability?	Admonition	81 (95%)	21 (91%)	60 (97%)	NS
		Reprimand	81 (95%)	22 (96%)	59 (95%)	NS
		Cash penalty	69 (81%)	19 (82%)	50 (81%)	NS
		Withdrawal of the right to practise the profession	77 (90,5%)	21 (91%)	56 (90%)	NS
		Public works	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	NS
		Limitation of personal freedom	23 (27%)	4 (17%)	19 (31%)	NS
		I do not know	1 (1%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	NS

5	What cash penalties are adjudicated for the violation of professional liability?	PLN 1 000-10 000	58 (68%)	18 (78%)	40 (64,5%)	NS
		PLN 100-1 000	3 (3,5%)	0 (0%)	3 (5%)	
		PLN 500-1 000	4 (5%)	1 (4%)	3 (5%)	
		I do not know	20 (23,5%)	4 (17%)	16 (26%)	
6	Who keeps the register of penalised nurses and midwives?	Regional Chamber of Nurses and Midwives	32 (37,5%)	3 (13%)	29 (47%)	$p < 0,052$
		Supreme Council of Nurses and Midwives	44 (52%)	19 (82%)	25 (40%)	
		Minister of Health	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	
		I do not know	7 (8,5%)	1 (4%)	6 (10%)	
7	What medical services can a nurse provide on her own in accordance with the Decree of the Minister of Health of 7 November 2007?	Prophylactic	84 (99%)	23 (100%)	61 (98%)	NS
		Diagnostic	61 (72%)	20 (87%)	41 (66%)	NS
		Therapeutic	50 (60%)	16 (70%)	34 (55%)	NS
		Dietetic	37 (43,5%)	9 (39%)	28 (45%)	NS
		I do not know	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	NS
8	When can a nurse administer a drug to a patient on her own, without a doctor's order?	In an emergency situation	72 (85%)	21 (91%)	51 (82%)	NS
		In palliative therapy	11 (13%)	1 (4%)	10 (6%)	
		I do not know	2 (2%)	1 (4%)	1 (2%)	

Source: authors' study

Replying to the question about the source of knowledge on the legal regulations governing the performance of the nursing profession, the majority of the respondents indicated school/university, followed by the Internet. The remaining two answers (from another nurse – $p < 0.002$ and at school/university – $p < 0.002$) were statistically significant. Midwives with higher education gave the largest number of correct answers to the remaining questions from the table below. Detailed results can be seen in **Tables 3 and 4**.

Table 3. Knowledge of legal regulations concerning the performance of the profession in the studied group of nurses (Part I)

No.	Question	Answer	The whole group	Group 1	Group 2	P
1	Have you got acquainted with the legal acts regulating the performance of the nursing profession?	Yes	75 (88%)	19 (82%)	56 (90%)	NS
		No	10 (12%)	4 (18%)	6 (10%)	
2	If so, where did you gain the knowledge of the legal regulations concerning the performance of the nursing profession?	From another nurse	26 (30,5%)	13 (56,5%)	13 (21%)	$p < 0.002$
		At school/university	64 (75%)	12 (52%)	52 (84%)	$p < 0.002$
		From press	20 (23,5%)	8 (35%)	12 (19%)	NS
		From the Internet	33 (27%)	10 (43,5%)	23 (37%)	NS
		Others	5 (6%)	1 (4%)	4 (6%)	NS
3	Do you consider knowledge of the legal acts in question necessary in the professional work of a nurse?	Yes	77 (90,5%)	20 (88%)	57 (92%)	NS
		No	1 (1%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	
		I have no opinion	7 (8,5%)	2 (8%)	5 (8%)	

4	Which of the legal acts listed regulate the performance of the nursing profession?	Law on the Profession of a Nurse and a Midwife of 15 July 2011	82 (96%)	23 (100%)	59 (95%)	NS
		Law on the Professional Self-government of 1 July 2011	36 (42%)	9 (39%)	27 (43.5%)	NS
		Civil Code	4 (5%)	2 (8%)	2 (3%)	NS
		Penal Code	7 (8%)	2 (8%)	5 (8%)	NS
		Decree of the Minister of Health of 7 November 2007	29 (34%)	11 (44%)	18 (29%)	NS
5	How long has the Law on the Profession of a Nurse and a Midwife been in force?	1 January 2012	37 (43%)	10 (40%)	27 (43.5%)	NS
		15 July 2011	22 (26%)	4 (16%)	18 (29%)	
		1 July 2011	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
		15 July 1996	22 (26%)	8 (32%)	14 (22.5%)	
		I do not know	4 (5%)	1 (4%)	3 (5%)	
6	Type and scope of medical services rendered by a nurse without a doctor's order is specified in the form of ...	A decree	70 (82%)	18 (79%)	52 (84%)	NS
		A resolution	5 (6.5%)	1 (4%)	4 (6%)	
		A law	3 (3.5%)	0 (0%)	3 (5%)	
		I do not know	7 (8%)	4 (17%)	3 (5%)	
		Since 1 July 2012	13 (15%)	2 (9%)	11 (18%)	
7	How long has the Law on the Professional Self-government been in force?	Since 7 July 1991	17 (20%)	5 (22%)	12 (19%)	NS
		Since 1 January 2012	35 (41%)	9 (39%)	26 (43%)	
		I do not know	19 (22%)	7 (30%)	12 (19%)	
		Performance of the profession of a nurse and a midwife	81 (95%)	22 (96%)	59 (95%)	
8	What does the Law on the Profession of a Nurse and a Midwife refer to?	Being awarded the right to practise the profession of a nurse and a midwife	59 (69%)	16 (69.5%)	43 (69%)	NS
		Professional education of a nurse and a midwife	60 (70.5%)	20 (87%)	40 (64.5%)	NS
		Principles of the professional self-government functioning	37 (43.5%)	2 (9%)	35 (56%)	NS
		Professional liability of a nurse and a midwife	36 (42%)	11 (48%)	25 (40%)	NS
		I do not know	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	NS

Source: authors' study

Table 4. Knowledge of legal regulations concerning the performance of the profession in the studied group of nurses (Part II)

No.	Question	Answer	The group as a whole	Group 1	Group 2	p
1	Is the profession of a nurse an independent profession?	Yes	72 (85%)	21 (91%)	51 (82%)	NS
		Partly	12 (14%)	1 (4.5%)	10 (16%)	
		No	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
		I do not know	2 (1%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (2%)	

2	A nurse providing health services enjoys legal protection foreseen for ...	A public officer	70 (82%)	19 (83%)	51 (84%)	NS
		A medical officer	13 (15%)	3 (13%)	10 (16%)	
		A social officer	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
		I do not know	2 (2%)	1 (4%)	1 (2%)	
3	Can a nurse provide a patient with information about the patient's health status?	Yes	2 (2%)	1 (4%)	1 (2%)	NS
		Yes – within a scope necessary to provide nursing care	75 (89%)	17 (78%)	58 (92%)	
		No	6 (7%)	2 (8%)	4 (6%)	
		I do not know	2 (2%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	
4	How can a nurse practise the profession?	Under a work contract	83 (98%)	22 (96%)	61 (98%)	NS
		Under a service contract	35 (41%)	10 (43.5%)	25 (40%)	NS
		Under a civil law contract	62 (73%)	15 (65%)	47 (76%)	NS
		As a volunteer	67 (79%)	20 (87%)	47 (76%)	NS
		Under a professional practical placement	51 (60%)	12 (52%)	39 (63%)	NS
5	What law regulates the performance of the profession of a nurse under a contract?	Under a contract	56 (66%)	15 (65%)	41 (66%)	NS
		I do not know	1 (1%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	
		Labour Code	8 (9.5%)	1 (4%)	7 (11%)	
		Civil Code	40 (47%)	9 (39%)	31 (50%)	
		Law on the Profession of a Nurse and a Midwife of 15 July 2011	31 (36.5%)	11 (48%)	20 (32%)	
6	Can a nurse provide additional nursing care in the same therapeutic unit, such as a hospital?	I do not know	6 (7%)	2 (8%)	4 (7%)	NS
		Yes	62 (73%)	18 (78%)	44 (71%)	
		No	13 (15%)	2 (8%)	11 (18%)	
		I do not know	10 (12%)	3 (13%)	7 (11%)	
7	What form of a contract must a nurse providing additional nursing care conclude?	Work contract	9 (10.5%)	2 (8%)	7 (11%)	NS
		Civil law contract	48 (56%)	12 (52%)	36 (58%)	
		Contract agreement	20 (23.5%)	6 (26%)	14 (23%)	
		I do not know	8 (9%)	3 (13%)	5 (8%)	
8	How long is the retraining of a nurse with a 6-year break in practising the profession?	No less than 6 months	54 (63.5%)	14 (61%)	40 (64.5%)	NS
		No longer than 6 months	14 (16.5%)	4 (17%)	10 (16%)	
		No less than 3 months	14 (16.5%)	5 (22%)	9 (14.5%)	
		No longer than 3 months	3 (3.5%)	0 (0%)	3 (5%)	
		I do not know	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
9	Does the retraining of a nurse with a break in practising the profession require the supervision of another nurse?	Yes	84 (99%)	22 (96%)	62 (100%)	NS
		No	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
10	How do you assess the level of your knowledge concerning the performance of the nursing profession?	I know very little	1 (1%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	NS
		I know little	38 (45%)	12 (52%)	26 (42%)	
		I know a lot	42 (49%)	10 (40%)	32 (52%)	
		I know more than a lot	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	4 (6%)	

Source: authors' study

Education had no influence on the respondents' answers to the question about updating professional knowledge and skills (**Table 5**).

Table 5. Assessment of the nurses' knowledge concerning postgraduate education

No.	Question	Answer	Group as a whole	Group 1	Group 2	p
1	Is a nurse obliged to keep updating her professional knowledge and skills?	Yes	85 (100%)	23 (100%)	62 (100%)	NS
		No	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
		I do not know	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
2	Is a nurse entitled to a training leave for the purpose of postgraduate training?	Yes	25 (30%)	9 (39%)	16 (26%)	NS
		Yes but only when she is referred to it by the employer	56 (66%)	14 (61%)	42 (68%)	
		No	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	
		I do not know	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	
3	How long must a nurse work for an employer referring her to postgraduate training?	3 years	60 (70.5%)	14 (60%)	46 (74.5%)	NS
		Till reaching the retirement age	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
		There is no obligation of this kind	14 (16.5%)	5 (22%)	9 (14.5%)	
		I do not know	11 (13%)	4 (18%)	7 (11%)	
		Specialist training	53 (62%)	17 (78%)	36 (58%)	
4	What types of postgraduate education do you know?	Specialist course	73 (86%)	20 (87%)	53 (85%)	NS
		Qualification course	79 (93%)	22 (96%)	57 (92%)	NS
		Complementary course	58 (68%)	17 (78%)	41 (66%)	NS
		Specialist course	43 (51%)	13 (57%)	40 (64%)	NS
		2 years	72 (85%)	19 (83%)	53 (85%)	NS
5 years	6 (7%)	0 (0%)	6 (10%)			
There are no requirements in this respect	4 (5%)	2 (8%)	2 (3%)			
6	After what period of time can a nurse apply for admission to another specialty study subsidized from public funds?	I do not know	3 (3%)	2 (8%)	1 (2%)	NS
		5 years	56 (66%)	19 (83%)	2 (3%)	

Source: authors' study

Respondents with medium-level education gave more correct answers to the question about the legal act regulating the activity of nurses' chambers, membership in professional self-government, duration of the term of nurses' chambers and the sense of duty to pay contributions than nurses with higher education. Detailed results are presented in **Table 6**.

Table 6. Assessment of nurses' knowledge on the organization of the professional self-government of nurses and midwives

No.	Question	Answer	The group as a whole	Group 1	Group 2	p
1	What legal act regulates the activity of nursing chambers?	Law on the Profession of a Nurse and a Midwife of 15 July 2011	9 (10.5%)	1 (4%)	8 (13%)	NS
		Decree of the Minister of Health of 7 November 2007	6 (7%)	1 (4%)	5 (8%)	
		Law on the Professional Self-government of 1 July 2011	62 (73%)	20 (87%)	42 (68%)	
2	Is it obligatory to belong to the professional self-government?	I do not know	8 (9.5%)	1 (4%)	7 (11%)	NS
		Yes	64 (75%)	20 (87%)	44 (71%)	
		No	11 (13%)	1 (4%)	10 (16%)	
		I do not know	10 (12%)	2 (8%)	8 (13%)	
3	What is the organization unit of the professional self-government on the national level?	Supreme Chamber of Nurses and Midwives	54 (63%)	14 (61%)	40 (64%)	NS
		Regional Chamber of Nurses and Midwives	7 (8%)	1 (4%)	6 (10%)	
		National Professional Union of Nurses and Midwives	22 (26%)	7 (28%)	15 (24%)	
		I do not know	2 (2%)	1 (4%)	1 (2%)	
4	How long is the term of the organs of chambers of nurses?	4 years	65 (76%)	19 (82%)	46 (74%)	NS
		2 years	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	4 (6%)	
		5 years	6 (7%)	1 (4%)	5 (8%)	
		I do not know	10 (12%)	3 (13%)	7 (11%)	
		Yes	80 (94%)	23 (100%)	57 (92%)	
5	Is it obligatory to pay membership fees?	No	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	4 (6%)	NS
		I do not know	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	

Source: authors' study

Discussion

In literature, there are plenty of studies referring to legal acts concerning the nursing profession [13–19]. The largest number of publications concerns the knowledge of the Code of the Professional Ethics of Nurses and Midwives and the Law on the Profession of a Nurse and a Midwife.

The updating in January 2012 of the two most important laws concerning the performance of the nursing profession, i.e. the Law on the Profession of a Nurse and a Midwife as well as the Law on the Professional Self-Government, gave an impulse to the commencement of research on the level of knowledge of current legal regulations concerning the nursing profession among nurses.

The study by Rozwadowska *et al.* analysed the duty of a nurse to extend assistance in case of the life-threatening and injury to the patient's health status accord-

ing to the professional qualifications held. In the study referred to, almost all the respondents, 84% of whom were professionally active nurses, gave a correct answer. Another question considered the possibility of resuming work in the profession of the nurse or the midwife after an over 5-year long break in practising the profession. The study revealed that 76% of professionally active nurses were not able to indicate the correct answer, which reflected a significant lack of knowledge in respondents. Also, the awareness of the duty of a nurse to inform patients about their rights was found to be inadequate, with 86% of the nurses aware of having the duty to inform patients about their rights. Rozwadowska *et al.* also analysed the respondents' knowledge of the organ and time of lodging an appeal in case of receiving a decision of their right to practice the profession having been suspended. Professionally active nurses showed significant knowledge as 61% of the respondents indicated the correct answer. In the subject area of professional protection foreseen for a public officer, 65% of the nurses studied gave the correct answer. Studying the nurses' awareness of the question concerning the refusal to perform a doctor's order, 96% of the respondents revealed having knowledge of the subject. A similar percentage result (88%) was obtained in answering the question about the nurse's refusal to perform health services non-compliant with her conscience. Analysing the collected results, the authors concluded that the prevailing majority of the respondents showed good knowledge of the regulations applying to nurses and midwives. Our own study investigated the knowledge of the provisions of the law on the profession of a nurse extending the subject so as to cover issues resulting from the new contents included in the laws on the profession of a nurse and a midwife as well as on the professional self-government. The respondents were also asked about the duration of the nursing training with a 6-year break in practising the profession. The respondents revealed significant lack of knowledge as only 16% of the nurses studied gave the correct answer. The state of knowledge of the respondents as regards legal protection in the course of rendering medical services by the nurse proved high as 85% of the respondents correctly indicated a public officer. Asked what constitutes the organizational unit of the professional self-government on the national level, 64% of the respondents disclosed knowledge of the subject indicating the Supreme Chamber of Nurses and Midwives. The majority of the respondents (76%) knew the term of nursing chambers. Grochans *et al.* carried out assessment of the knowledge of legal acts which were applicable to nursing. The study covered professionally active nurses from different regions of Poland and took into account

the level of respondents' education. Analysing the results, the authors concluded that the knowledge of legal acts among nurses with medium-level education was the same as among nurses holding a master's degree. Nurses with higher education (bachelor's degree) showed the best knowledge of the legal acts. Our own study presented dependence between the knowledge of respondents and the level of education. Analysis of the obtained results indicates that the knowledge of legal acts concerning the performance of the nursing profession is better among nurses with higher education. This is reflected in the knowledge of issues related to obtaining the right to practise the profession and to professional liability. The knowledge of the remaining questions related to legal acts among nurses with both medium-level and higher education was on the same level. Another issue addressed in domestic literature was the question of professional liability connected with the performance of the nursing profession. Gawel *et al.* using a questionnaire of their own design, carried out a study on nurses employed in the Gorzów Centre of Paediatrics and Oncology with the purpose of assessing the awareness level of professional liability among nurses. In addition, the authors studied the knowledge of the legal acts regulating the profession of a nurse in force as well as the bodies responsible for issuing judgments in cases related to professional liability. Another issue analysed was the knowledge of proceedings before nurses' and midwives' courts in cases of adjudicating penalties concerning professional liability. The majority of the nurses did not know what body examined cases concerning professional liability – 71%. Moreover, not all the nurses were familiar with legal acts regulating the performance of the profession and professional liability. The majority, that is 79%, indicated the Law on the Profession of a Nurse and a Midwife. Only 22% pointed to the Decree of the Minister of Health of 2007 on the scope and type of preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitative services provided by the nurse independently, without the doctor's order. Analysing the results of the research carried out, the authors of the study showed that nurses' knowledge of normative acts concerning the performance of the profession and professional liability was unsatisfactory and required to be complemented. Reference to the research carried out is also contained in our own research in assessment of the nurses' knowledge regarding professional liability. Merely 45% of the nurses studied indicated correctly the source of professional liability – the Law on the Professional Self-government of 1 July 2011. 89% of the respondents expressed a belief that professional liability was borne before the professional court of nurses and midwives. The penalties applied by the professional

court of nurses and midwives most frequently indicated by respondents included admonitions (95%), reprimand (95%), withdrawal of the right to practise the profession (90%) and only in the last place the financial penalty (81%). The amount of the financial penalty for the violation of professional liability was correctly indicated by 68% of the respondents. The analysis of the results showed that the nurses' knowledge of professional liability is sufficient. In comparison with studies carried out earlier, the knowledge of the legal aspects of the nursing profession still seems to suggest a need for updating and permanent education of nurses in this area.

Conclusions

1. Nurses' knowledge of legal regulations concerning the performance of the nursing profession is insufficient and requires to be complemented.
2. The overall knowledge of legal acts regulating the performance of the nursing profession was not dependent on the level of respondents' education, with nurses with higher education showing a slightly higher level of knowledge in the area of professional liability.
3. Insufficient knowledge of legal issues concerning the nursing profession in the studied group of nurses requires that actions aimed at expanding this knowledge be undertaken during various forms of permanent education, in accordance with the principle of life-long education.

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