

Nursing students' knowledge, attitude and practices of infection prevention and control guidelines at a tertiary institution in the Western Cape: A cross sectional study

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Background: Nurses in sub-Saharan Africa are particularly at a higher risk of acquiring nosocomial infections, considering the increased prevalence of infectious diseases. It is therefore imperative that these nurses have a sound knowledge and understanding of infection prevention procedures.

Objective: The main objective of this study was to describe the knowledge, attitudes and practices concerning infection prevention and control precautions among nursing students in a resource limited setting.

Method: A cross sectional study design was employed. A self-administered questionnaire concerning infection prevention and control guidelines were made available to students enrolled in a mainstream programme for completion of an undergraduate nursing degree.

Setting and participants: A total of 301 students at second, third and final years of study from a tertiary institution in the Western Cape were invited to participate.

Results: The final cohort comprised of 301 students with the majority between the ages of 17-26 (88.2%), with a mean age of 23 ± 4.7 (SD) years and the dominant gender being female (83.4%). According to the classification system used in this study, majority of the students were overall evaluated as having good level of knowledge (47.4%) and poor attitude (41.7%) scores, with little difference in practice scores observed between different years of study. There was a positive correlation found between students' total attitude and total practice scores ($r = 0.48$ $p < 0.01$). Results showed that a significant association between gender with knowledge ($p < 0.05$), attitudes ($p < 0.05$) and practice ($p < 0.05$) exists. There was also a significant association between province and those who repeated a year with total knowledge scores ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that interactive infection control courses that promotes critical thinking are implemented at undergraduate level along with more stringent forms of assessments focusing on infection prevention and control, during clinical training.