

Australian nursing educators' perspectives on education and training to promote older people's oral health

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Background: Given the rapidly growing older population in Australia and their frequently poor oral health, nurses play a leadership role in ensuring effective oral health, associated systemic health and related quality of life for older people.

Aim: To investigate the perspectives of educators in Bachelor of Nursing programs regarding the education and training of nursing students to provide and promote oral health care for older people.

Methodology: Semi-structured interviews (n=13) were conducted with course coordinators and lecturers in accredited Bachelor of Nursing programs (n=10) across Australia. Participants were recruited by purposive sampling. Data were analysed thematically with the assistance of Nvivo12.

Results: Five main themes were identified: (1) importance of nurses' role in maintaining older people's oral health, (2) inconsistencies in current oral health care education and training for nursing students, (3) lack of focus on students' development of competencies to maintain older people's oral health, (4) segregated oral health care education and service provision system, and (5) the need to create opportunities for interprofessional learning and practice.

Conclusion: Education and training of nursing students to promote older people's oral health, especially when older people are dependent on others for their oral care, was a significant element in providing the best quality nursing care. Developing curriculum guidelines within learning domains of nursing accreditation standards is suggested to ensure that future nursing graduates acquire essential knowledge and competencies in oral health care to enhance nursing practice and improve the overall health and wellbeing of older people.

Biography : Vandana Bhagat is currently a PhD candidate at the Centre of Rural Health, University of Tasmania, Australia. She is a dentist from India and completed Master in advanced Health Services Management from Griffith University with academic award of excellence. Her PhD project focuses on improving oral health of older people by incorporating oral health care of older people component in nursing programs.

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