ATTITUDES OF PATRONAGE NURSES FROM THE CENTER FOR MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH TOWARDS SPECIALIZATION FOR WORK WITH CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Tamara Tcvetkova, Sonya Toncheva

Healthcare Department, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Varna

ABSTRACT

Various problems in the process of social integration of children with psycho-physical disabilities stem from the family. The birth of a child with mental or physical disorders causes very strong, negative emotions in parents and relatives. As a result, it violates the relationships within the family as well as all interpersonal relations. The purpose of this study is to explore attitudes towards specialization of visiting nurses from the Center for Maternal and Child Health (CMCH) Shumen for work with children with special needs. An inquiry among 25 medical professionals working in the framework of UNICEF project as visiting nurses at CMCH Shumen in the period March to April 2013 has proved this necessity. The main reason for their choice of specialization is improved possibilities for professional realization according to the majority (60.0%) of the respondents. None of them chose the answer "by chance" as a cause for qualification and only one pointed out that she had no "special motivation".

Keywords: *children, special needs, education, patronage nurses, specialization*

The „Government Strategy and Action Plan for protection of children's rights in the Republic of Bulgaria 2000-2003“ sets the main objectives and tasks for care and welfare of children. These are deinstitutionalization and development of alternative care and other social services for children with special needs and their families. The National Strategy for Protection and Social Inclusion of Children with Disabilities specifies the target group of children with disabilities (6).

Address for correspondence:

Tamara Tcvetkova
Healthcare Department
Faculty of Public Health
Medical University of Varna
55 Marin Drinov Str.
9002 Varna, Bulgaria
e-mail: tamara1960@abv.bg

Received: May 11, 2015

Accepted: June 24, 2015

The need for health and social care for children is acknowledged in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child from 1989 and in the Bulgarian Law on Child Protection (SG. No 48 of June 13, 2000). These documents contain the most important social and legal principles related to the welfare of children (7,8).

The National Strategy for protection and social integration of children with disabilities in Bulgaria is based on several principles including the right to:

1. a full, independent and dignified life;
2. active participation in public life;
3. be informed and express opinion on all matters concerning themselves;
4. effective access of each child with disability to quality education, vocational guidance and training;
5. unconditional access to health, medical and social rehabilitation;

6. recreational, cultural and sports activities, spiritual and personal development;
7. special support and care that contribute to the maximum development of the talents of the child with disability;
8. assistance - guaranteed and consistent with the financial situation of the parents aiming at satisfying the child's needs;
9. care in a family environment (5).

OBJECTIVE

To explore the attitudes of visiting nurses from the Center for Maternal and Child Health (CMCH) Shumen towards specialization for work with children with special needs.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A survey was conducted among 25 medical specialists trained in the framework of UNICEF project for visiting nurses in CMCH Shumen in the period March-April 2013. The survey was based on a structured anonymous questionnaire containing 29 questions aiming to assess the attitudes towards further professional specialization. The data was analyzed using the methods of descriptive statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The participating in the survey medical professionals have different educational levels presented in Fig. 1. The bigger part of the medical professionals have an educational degree "specialist" (41.60%), a quarter of them - a Bachelor degree (25%), while those with Master's degree are a smaller proportion of respondents (16.70%).

Fig. 1. Distribution of the participants according to educational level

We requested information whether patronage nurses have worked with children with special needs. Approximately two thirds of the respondents did not have experience with children with special needs

(68%), and those who had such experience (32%) were surrounded by children with similar needs.

We studied what is the total professional experience of the surveyed healthcare professionals.

Most of the respondents report 10 years and more professional experience (80%), and just two of the medical experts have less than 1 year experience.

More than half of the surveyed healthcare professionals are nurses (68%), while midwives are significantly less (24%). In addition, two answered that they have another specialty (8%). All respondents are unanimous in their opinion that it is necessary to apply a team approach in working with children with special needs.

We asked the respondents on whether they had attended specialized courses related to current issues in health care and social work (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Have you attended specialized courses related to current issues in health care and social services?

More than half of the medical professionals indicated that they had attended a different degree courses (60%) and besides this fact only eight of the respondents stated that they are familiar with the opportunities for specialization of medical professionals provided for in existing regulations (37.50%).

We assessed the familiarity of medical professionals with the regulations by their level of education and type of profession. There is weak correlation between the level of education and information ($r=0.28$ $p<0.05$), which shows that with increasing the level of education increases the percentage of persons familiar with the opportunities for further professional qualification of medical professionals provided by existing regulations.

The respondents with a Master's degree were all informed about the opportunities for further specialization provided with existing regulations ($p<0.05$) (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Familiarity of surveyed healthcare professionals with Regulation 34 (by level of education)

Analysis of the awareness of the respondents with Order 34 according to the type of their profession also shows that there are significant differences between representatives of different groups ($p < 0.05$). Most familiar are professionals who have indicated that they have another degree (100%) and least informed are nurses ($r = 0.41$ $p < 0.05$).

We studied the willingness of the respondents to engage in any of the professional specializations provided at the Medical University "Prof. Dr Paraskev Stoyanov", Varna. More than two thirds were willing to participate in any of the specialization courses (63.60%). All midwives and other specialty professionals are sure they want to continue their professionalization.

We examined the views of the respondents what type of specialization they would like to choose (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. Types of specializations at MU - Varna

Most of the respondents chose the speciality anesthesiology and intensive care (33.30%), followed by child and primary health care (27.80%), while the least selected one is operating and dressing technique (16.70%). The respondents' preferences cannot be generalized as the sample is rather small and non-representative.

We studied also the respondents motivating factors for the decision to continue their professional development with specialization. The main reason for the choice of specialization is improved realization in the profession (60%). None of the respondents indicated randomness as a cause for qualification and one pointed out that she had no special motivation.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The majority of the experts have attended specialized courses, and only a third of them are familiar with the opportunities for specialization of medical professionals provided for in Regulation 34 (37.50%).
2. Increasing the level of education increases the percentage of persons familiar with the opportunities provided by Regulation 34 for post-graduate qualification of medical specialists.
3. More than 2/3 of respondents are willing to participate in any of the specializations provided in MU - Varna (63.60%).
4. Most of the respondents would like to specialize anesthesiology and intensive care (33.30%), followed by child and primary health care (27.80%).

REFERENCES

1. Guidelines for Alternative Care of Children. Framework of the United Nations. UNICEF Bulgaria. <https://www.unicef.bg/assets/PDFs/new/31.pdf>. Bulgarian.
2. National plan for integration of children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases in the national educational system. http://rcpleven.com/05dokumenti/n_plan_sop.pdf. Bulgarian.
3. National Strategy „Vision for deinstitutionalization of children in Bulgaria“, adopted by the Council of Ministers on 24.02.2010 http://sacp.government.bg/_images/uploads/plan.doc
4. National Strategy for Children 2008-2018. www.stopech.sacp.government.bg/file.php?fid=281. Bulgarian.
5. National Strategy for protection and social integration of children with disabilities. <http://sacp.government.bg/programi-dokladi/strategii-programi-planove/deca-uvrejdania/>. Bulgarian.

6. Action Plan for the Protection of Street Children 2003-2006 http://sacp.government.bg/media/cms_page_media/22/dokl05_1.doc. Bulgarian.
7. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20.11.1989, the decision ratified by the Grand National Assembly of 11.04.1991 - SG. 32 of 23.04.1991, in effect from 3.07.1991. Bulgarian.
8. Law on Child Protection, State Gazette 48 of 13.06.2000, as last amended. No. 69 of 5.08.2008. Bulgarian.