

**The Attitude of Perioperative Nurses
Towards
Continuing Education and
Professional Development**

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Dedication

*This thesis is dedicated in loving memory of my late parents,
Willie and Dhanum Pillay and late brother, Segrán,
who were denied the chance to celebrate this chapter
of my career*

This is to certify that this thesis has not been submitted for a
higher degree at another university.

Date: May 2006

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Abstract

The attitude of perioperative nurses towards continuing education and professional development

Continuing education and professional development has become a popular term among many professional groups in recent years. However in recent years the professional organisations are exploring continuing education and professional development to monitor accountability and clinical competence. In a broad sense continuing education and professional development involves updating and maintaining knowledge and skills to perform tasks in the normal realm of careers. This type of development is seen as a means to provide quality services to clients, customers or patients as the case may be, relevant to a specific vocation. Employers and registration agencies in Australia and elsewhere globally are considering making participation in continuing education and professional development activities mandatory for relicensure to practise.

This study examined the attitude of perioperative nurses towards continuing education and professional development. The primary purpose of this study was to explore what perioperative nurses perceived as continuing education and professional development and whether they were keen to participate in such activities. Factors that enhance or deter perioperative nurses' participation in continuing education and professional development were explored. Their attitudes towards mandatory continuing education and professional development were also investigated in view of the possibility that continuing education and professional development could in the future be required for continuing registration to maintain authority to practise.

The research employed two complementary methods of data collection. The first was a survey questionnaire, which was mailed to a cohort of 400 perioperative nurses. The second involved a follow up telephone interview performed to further explore themes that emerged from the analysis of the questionnaire data. The interviewees were selected from the cohort that received the questionnaire.

The analysis of the survey data indicated that the perioperative nurses in this study displayed a positive attitude towards continuing education and professional development as well as mandatory continuing education and professional development. Factors that were perceived as motivators for participation in continuing education and professional development included funded courses, study leave and courses related to current speciality. Barriers to participation in continuing education and professional development activities included financial costs and lack of time.

Telephone interviews where issues raised in the questionnaires were explored in greater depth was carried out on a sub-group selected from the original cohort. These interviews reinforced the earlier finding that the nurses in the survey were in strong favour of mandatory continuing education and professional development in New South Wales because their knowledge and skills were kept up to date, which would lead to improved patient care. Interviewees did, however, emphasise that resources would have to be provided to allow them to attend continuing education and professional development, preferably within working hours, and that any continuing education and professional development must be relevant to their practice.

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