Memories of Nursing in Singapore an oral history approach



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INTRODUCTION

Documenting the nursing heritage is vital in preserving memories of the profession unique to the culture, while the knowledge of the past in nursing can also influence current and future practices. The growth and educational development of the nursing profession in Singapore continued to advance over the years, playing an essential role in ensuring quality healthcare in Singapore.

AIM

To record nurses' experiences of journey of nursing profession in Singapore from the early days of formalization of nursing education to today's practice.

METHODLOGY

Study sample

Nurses who received training in Singapore institutions from 1956 to 2008 and either worked or currently still working in Singapore hospitals (Figure 1). n=9

Figure 1. Participant profile

- Silent Generation (born 1928-1945)
- **■** Baby boomers (born 1946-1964)
- Gen X (born 1965-1980)
- Millennials (born 1981-1995)

METHODLOGY

Study design

- Oral history research approach.
- In-depth interviews were conducted from December 2018 to December 2020, covering areas including: personal reactions to nursing, motivation to become a nurse, experiences in training school, experiences after graduating while in practice and pursuing further education, changes seen in nursing and with focus on memories and significant events.
- Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim.
- Thematic analysis was undertaken with 'open-coding' techniques.



RESULTS

Mean age of the participants was 63 years (Range 32 to 89 years) and completed their training between 1952 to 2006. Four main themes were generated (Figure 2).

Rewarding moments

"I feel blessed when I see patients recover and even when they don't recover well, they come to say thank you and they always have memories of us." (P30-Year 1966)

Becoming a nurse

- Rewarding moments
- Pride in being a nurse Memories and influence of major events in Singapore
- on nurses

Essence of

n=14

n=26

nursing

Future

outlook in

nursing

Spyros disaster, 1978

I went home I couldn't sleep. Just thinking, my gosh, so many patients need me in the hospital. Just couldn't close my eyes... Because I couldn't sleep so I came back at 2 o'clock. And I help wherever I can... It's a really overwhelming experience. Brings back memory. And so many patients passed away. (P16-Year 1963)

Nursing is about people's _earning-a lifelong process touch rather than ...because healthcare delivery system is more complex, is more

- dynamic...to be able to put everything together, you really need the knowledge, skills and people are getting older which also means that the patient case
- [need] to be highly skilled and knowledgeable...in order to meet the need of the patient." (P52-Year 1984)

is no longer simple...you definitely

technology

- Genuine passion in nursing
- Learning is a lifelong process in Nursing

Generational differences

- Difference in nursing roles
- Doctor-nurse relationship
- Patients and their caregivers

Individual traits

support

nursing

External sources of

Challenges faced in

The nursing image

Difference in nursing roles

"[Nursing is] more high risk as compared to 10 years ago and there is a lot more focus on patient centered care, and holistic care because of the complexity of our patients as well... Nursing is no longer just what people say, it is changing... it is a head-to-toe care plus emotion, family, invasive procedure." P53-Year 2006

Patients and caregivers

"today's patients are different from the patients of yesterday who wanted basic care, but today's patients want to know more on what's happening to them and they want an in-depth knowledge of what the doctors are talking about." P11-1971

Individual traits

"You must have a passion in nursing. You must have passion in ah helping people and care for people. Then that that should be the basis of nursing you see. If you don't have these, then you don't make a good nurse." (P2-Year 1964)

Figure 2. Themes and subthemes generated from thematic analysis with illustrative quotes

Inevitable

changes

Resilience

Conclusion

Documentation of nurses' voices using the oral history approach provided valuable insight and enabled preservation of the memories of the nursing experience. Nurses of the past continue to impact current nursing practices and attitudes. With the change in nursing roles, compassion in practice needs to be re-looked. Continuous learning is vital to accommodate the changing healthcare landscape.