

## Title: Supporting Nursing Students Through Developing Their Representations & Skills

The subject of this degree dissertation is based upon an experience I once lived during one of my first-year placements. Following this episode, I decided to focus my research on the issues surrounding the support provided to nursing students during their work experience. In fact, during a placement in a long-term care nursing home, a nursing auxiliary asked me – due to understaffing issues – to provide intimate personal care for a resident I had previously never taken care of. I felt rather astonished that this health care professional failed to relay the relevant and valuable information regarding the elderly person I was required to assist, in particular his suffering from hydrocele. Afterwards, it is undeniable that I became more aware of the emotions that might result from such trigger-events. This helped me develop and enhance my conceptions of elderly patients afflicted with hydrocele. Not only did this event challenge my perceptions of the features related to patients' intimate care, it also challenged the way I perceived the transmission of information amongst health professionals, and above all, my views on nursing practices. It is evident that these perceptions and issues are conclusively embedded in the heart of social representation theories.

I conducted three interviews with different health professionals – two nurses practising in the same nursing home, and a nursing assistant working in a medical ward. They were of considerable assistance to me, and my research went the faster for their cooperation.

After reflecting upon these interviews, two concepts emerged – the support shown to nursing students and the concept of skills. Indeed, the professionals assisting student nurses are naturally permeated with perceptions which influence their behaviour. Skills and competences are the requisite conditions for effective support. Skills are at the core of the nursing profession, and teaching as well as guiding unexperienced nurses form a significant part of nurses' routines. It appears now clear to me that social representations are undoubtedly entrenched in nurses' daily clinical practices.

**Key Words :** nursing students – transmissions of information – representations – bodies – skills – support

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