A study on the effects and improvement on clinical practicum by preceptor ship

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A study on the effects and improvement on clinical practicum by preceptor ship

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to introduce mentor-preceptor ship to maternity nursing clinical practice and to explore its effects on the clinical practice. The subjects were the third-year students (n=34) doing maternity nursing clinical practice and the midwives (n=30) who acted as their supervisors with informed consent. The administered questionnaire contained open-ended questions on "what they learned," "human relationships," and "interaction between the student and the supervisor." As for the data analysis, three researchers read the remarks picked up and discussed them in order to see if there was consistency in their interpretations and naming of categories. Twenty-four students (70.6%) found the supervisors' guidance to be thorough and they were satisfied with it. On the other hand, 22 supervisors (73.3%) felt that their guidance was inadequate. We found in the following seven categories : *wide range of nursing work, role division and cooperation among nurses, smooth functions of medical teams, flexible approaches to individual cases, application of care skills, reviewing one's own nursing skills, and formation of self-image as a nurse.* The significant relationship was extracted from the compatibility of supervisors and students : the supervisors felt negative feelings such as "cumbersome to supervise them" while the students held likewise negative feeling such as "hard to relate to them." When in this case, there was some distance between the two parties, indicating burden and stress. Mentor-preceptor ship has a significant implication to improvement of the traditional clinical practice where students take up a particular case and develop nursing. Likewise, matching of students and their supervisors is an important factor, which could greatly affect success of their clinical practice.

KEY WORDS

Preceptor ship, Clinical practicum, Effects, Maternity nursing

Introduction

The importance of clinical practice has long been emphasized in basic nursing education. The studies on nursing clinical practice can be summarized in tension and anxiety of students, their stress and conflicts, interpersonal relationships, burden of keeping clinical journals, and lower self-esteem[1-4]. On the other hand, there are studies that attempt to ease clinical students' anxiety level and help make their clinical experience more effective[5-7]. According to Suzui's review[8], a research titled "Complaints against National Health Service (NHS)," done by Salvage in England in 1986, is the beginning of the mentorship mentioned above. According to this research, people

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held greater complaint against medical professionals than against medical treatments, pointing out that improvements can not be made through traditional nursing education. Up to then, the main objective of traditional nursing education had been the acquisition of knowledge and specialized skills, overlooking the importance of high level maturity for nurses. Even in Japan, the concept of mentorship is being examined in view of nursing education for the 21st century[9]. Hirasawa et al[10] describe about the effects of introducing mentorship in order to examine how to improve clinical practice. This includes effective supervision and shortening of practice hours in relation to introducing baccalaureate programs for midwifery education. It is said that the main reason for the accelerating introduction of mentorship in England was the economic slough of NHS, society requiring the maximum effect with the minimum labor cost[11]. In Japan, as nursing education is geared towards baccalaureate programs in recent years, incompetence of nursing graduates has been pointed out. It is the responsibility of educational institutions to examine what should be the effective clinical supervision in order to facilitate acquisition of necessary skills by the time students' graduate from university. Therefore, in this study, we have decided to examine an effective clinical practice approach in maternal nursing by introducing preceptor ship and to see if it can be adopted in the near future.

1. Definition of Terms

There are a number of definitions of "preceptor." The operational definition used in this study does not exactly refer to "preceptor ship" is defined in this study as follows : "a strategy to achieve [nursing clinical practice] goals by the student of nursing practice and his/her supervisor in a one-to-one relationship." The supervisor provides the student with information regarding actual nursing of hospitalized patients, appropriately advises the student in regards to the student's nursing plan that can be applied to nursing practice, conducts bedside teaching, and gives psychological support to the student as a senior partner.

2. Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to introduce preceptor ship to maternity nursing clinical practice and to explore its effects on the clinical practice itself based on the responses of the clinical students and their supervisors.

Method

1. Subjects

The subjects consisted of two parties : one was a group of 34 third-year students doing maternity nursing clinical practice (referred to as "students" hereafter) and the other was a group of 30 midwives who acted as their supervisors and who had more than 3 years of experience as midwives (referred to as "supervisors" hereafter).

2. Material

The purpose of the study was explained and informed consent for the participation was obtained. A three-day period was given for the preceptor ship trial for those who gave consent. There were three shifts during this period : 8 : 30-12 : 30 (day shift), 15 : 30-22 : 00 (evening-shift) and 5 : 45-10 : 00 (morning shift). These shifts were arranged according to the supervisors' work schedule so that each subject would experience each shift. The reasons for having the three shifts were three : (1) Hospitalized patients' life could be observed as a whole ; (2) Care-skills during morning and evening shifts tended to be nurse-oriented ; and (3) Transition between the shifts could be observed. To elaborate on the last reason, this arrangement allowed students to learn how the care was passed on to the next student, enabling them to learn its major points and the priorities for nursing. Selection of the supervisors was done in consultation with the head midwife. The administered questionnaire contained structured questions on "what they learned", "human relationships," and "interaction between the student and the supervisor." The questionnaires were handed to the supervisors on the first day of supervising and to the students on the day of orientation. They were collected from both groups after the supervising was completed.

3. Data Analysis

As for the data analysis, three researchers read the remarks made by both the supervisors and the

students and picked up the parts that they found related to the purpose of the study. First, each researcher identified similarities and differences of the contents of the remarks, extracting categories. Then, they checked their analyses against each other's and discussed them in order to see if there was consistency in their interpretations and naming of categories. When they found inconsistency, they re-read the remarks and re-examined their interpretation by comparing the contents of the students' and the supervisors' remarks until they reached certain degree of agreement.

4. Ethical Considerations

We first explained to the head nurse at the hospital where the clinical practice was to take place, the rationale of introducing preceptor ship to maternity nursing clinical practice. After the approval was obtained, we consulted with the head nurse of the ward. We also obtained approval in regard to presenting results and analyses of the study and making use of the results for future evaluation of clinical practice. We then explained to the supervisors that the participation in the study would have no relationship to the evaluation of the students' clinical practice and that the participation was absolutely voluntary. We also explained to them that the supervisors' choice not to participate would not affect their position or the evaluation of their supervising competence. As for the students, we explained to them at the time of clinical practice orientation, the purpose of introducing preceptor ship and the non-relationship of their participation in the study to their practice evaluation. They were also informed that the results might be shared with the public. It was also explained that the contents of their remarks were not to be disclosed to either party. Although the subjects were asked to write their names, privacy of their personal information was to be protected. In all of the above procedures, the subjects' consent had been obtained before they actually participated. The analysis of the results was shared with the head nurse and the supervisors before the presentation in order to assure that there is no problem.

5. Objectives, Form and Method of Clinical Practice

The objectives of the maternity clinical practice are three : (1) To understand physiological and social-psychological needs of the gravida, parturient, puerperal, and neonate and be able to develop a nursing process ; (2) To understand the roles and special characteristics of nursing working in obstetric gynecology out-patient division, observe actual nursing practice and be able to assist them and ; (3) To manage maternity nursing and fulfill the roles and functions of nurses who work on the maternity health medical team.

The three-week maternity nursing clinical practice has each part consisting of approximately 10 students. Students are divided into two groups using a sliding system. During the first week, each group takes charge of one case with either the gravida or puerperal in hospital, developing a nursing process. During the second week, students observe and provide partial assistance with the outpatient division or the newborn intensive care unit. During the third week, they go through preceptor ship program. The other groups of students simply go through the above three stages in the reverse order. Thus, crowing of the hospital wards with practicum students is minimized, avoiding overlapping of cases which students deal with.

Results

All the supervisors and students fully participated in the program. They also agreed to the possibility of presenting the results in public. All the supervisors replied saying that they wished to make use of the results in order to improve their supervising skills.

1. Favorable Attitude towards Preceptor ship Program

In terms of the evaluation of preceptor ship program, 24 students (70.6%) found the supervisors' guidance to be thorough and they were satisfied with it. On the other hand, 22 supervisors (73.3%) felt that their guidance was inadequate. Only eight supervisors (26.7%) felt that their guidance was adequate.

Table 1. Students' Learning and Semantic Contents Obtained through Preceptor ship

Learning Categories		Semantic Contents of Learning
<Wide range of nursing work>	⟶	Understood what kind of work nurses did
<Role division and cooperation among nurses>	⟶	Deepened the understanding of roles and functions of nurses
<Smooth functions of medical team>	⟶	Realized practical roles of nurses
<Flexibible approaches to individual cases>	⟶	Reinforced the real feeling and understanding of practical care
<Application of care skills>	⟶	Became aware of an expanding world of care, shifting from one's own basic care skills
<Reviewing one's own nursing skills>	⟶	Further motivation and stimulation to learn about care skills
<Formation of self-image as a nurse>	⟶	Encounter with a supervisor who is a role model

2. Learning through Preceptor ship Program

The analysis of the students' remarks on what they learned through the program, resulted in the following seven categories : *wide range of nursing work, role division and cooperation among nurses, smooth functions of medical teams, flexible approaches to individual cases, application of care skills, reviewing one's own nursing skills, and formation of self-image as a nurse.*

The categories and their semantic contents are shown in Table 1. The extracted seven categories of learning had no significance in their order. However, there was a significant relationship among them according to whether the supervisors were the chief midwife or a staff midwife. Each of the categories is further described below in terms of how and in what situations they were learned with appropriate quotations from the students' remarks.

1) Wide range of nursing work and role division and cooperation among nurses :

The students learned this while accompanying their supervisor and observing their interaction with the patients. For example, when one supervisor was observing the fetus' heart beat and the general condition of the patient, the supervisor was told that the patient had wanted to be discharged soon. The supervisor immediately conveyed the wish to the doctor in charge. As the supervisor was moving on to the next bed, the outpatient division informed her that a new patient was being transferred. The supervisor immediately consulted with the head nurse and then obtained the doctor's instruction, asking an assistant nurse to send for the patient's file. The supervisor was also engaged in communicating with the bedding supplies department and the dietary department, filling in and preparing relevant documents, typing into the computer and the like, which were not necessarily indicated in the daily plans which the students had received. The students thus realized how wide a range the nurse work was. The students also learned that there was role division and cooperation among the nurses. One student commented :

> After receiving the news that a new patient was going to move in, my supervisor reported it to the midwife in charge, conveyed the doctor's instruction, changed the morning plan, consulted with midwife about the necessity to send the patient first to the examination room and about the possibility of finishing the treatment early depending on the test results. My supervisor was also coordinating the time of the pre-scheduled cleaning and hair washing to be delayed after the examination.

2) Smoothing functions of medical team : The students also learned smoothing functions of the medical team by observing the communication between the doctors and the nurse and how they were coordinating it. One student said :

> Although my supervisor was the chief midwife, she was asking the staff midwife to confirm the input of the doctor's instruction. She was also explaining to the patient's family how long it would take to complete the examination, asking the family to have lunch in the meantime and to receive briefing from the doctor afterwards. She was also communicating to

the doctor the time and place of the meeting with the family. The patient, a pregnant woman, was also asking the supervisor if she could leave the hospital early. The supervisor answered, saying that she would convey her wish to the doctor and discuss the possibility after looking at the results of echography. She said to me, "The pregnant woman is worried about her child left at home but may be feeling timid to ask the doctor if she could be discharged early. That is why I think we should be advocates for her." The supervisor took into consideration the patient's family background and tried to reassure her.

3) Application of care skills : The student was also present at the time of the diagnostic interview done by the supervisor, learning about the application of care skills. The student commented, "I observed how my supervisor was gathering information. It was different from the way I do. I thought I should adopt her way into mine."

4) Flexible approaches to individual cases : Each day the students accompanied their supervisors and observed their care techniques and their interaction with the patients. The students noted their supervisors' flexible approaches to the patients.

I was given opportunity to assist cleaning the patients who required rest. I helped clean the back for one patient and the feet using aroma agents for another. I asked my supervisor why the approaches were different from patient to patient. She replied, "You may think that everyone requires help with cleaning the back because it is hard for them to reach it. But in reality some people want to wash their back for themselves. It also depends on the person's mood for the day." She also said, "Not everyone likes aroma, either. Sometimes their roommates do not like it. That is why we occasionally wash their feet with aroma in a separate room." I learned the importance of adjusting nursing care to the needs of patients. I would like to adopt my supervisor's care skills to my nursing skills."

5) Reviewing one's own nursing skills : The students reviewed their own nursing skills and gained more awareness. They also made use of the experience to adopt their supervisors' care techniques into their own. Through the interaction with their supervisors, the students saw them as their role models. Through the clinical practice and interaction with their supervisors in three shifts, the students came to enjoy intimate conversations with the supervisors. The following are some examples of their conversations : "Isn't working on three shifts stressful?", "How do you manage your life? I'm not good at working on nights. Don't you feel tired in the morning?" and "Do you feel worth doing nursing work?" The supervisors shared their experiences and the students replied, saying "I am very impressed and I respect you. That is what a profession is about, isn't it? I wonder if I can follow your example."

6) Formation of self-image as a nurse : Thus they students used their experience as an opportunity to form their self-image as a nurse.

3. The Supervisors' Experiences in Preceptor ship Program (Table 2)

1) The supervisors' learning : Many of the supervisors commented that they learned many things about their supervising skills through the preceptor ship program. Many of them were learned through the interaction with the students and were about the reflection on their nursing practice and what they would need to learn more. The supervisors also came to do some self-analysis through receiving the students' questions and listening to what they said. All in all, their responses were very positive.

2) How guidance should be provided : The supervisors reflected on how they should provide guidance to students. Their responses included "[my guidance was] inadequate," "self-reflection," "still worried," "lack of consideration," "difficult to provide guidance," "concerned," and "[I am] not confident." The greatest factor leading to such responses was "I could not afford mental energy to provide adequate guidance due to the night shift and busy schedule."

3) Understanding towards students and their attitude towards clinical practice : Through the interaction with the students, the supervisors increased their understanding of the contemporary youths' mentality and their worries as nursing students. Their comments included the following : "I had a chance to learn about the students' thoughts, their optimism and carefulness, their positive and negative aspects," "I have come to better understand the students' position and what they

Table 2. Supervisors' Experiences Obtained through Preceptor ship

Observations & Learning by Supervisors

- Learned a lot through supervising the students ; was educational
- Was a good experience ; was helped to review own learning and recognize phenomena
- Rediscovered own perspective and behavioral patern
- Was effective for myself
- Positive experience in that the students and the supervisor stimulated each other
- The supervisor learned a lot, obtaining new perspectives

How Supervisors Can Improve Themselves

- Concerned that there was not adequate explanation to students
- Wished that certain things could have been done to imrpove students' learning
- Felt sorry about not providing enough guidance due to lack of preparation
- Could have paid more attention to better arrangement so as to allow more active participation in care by students
- Not sure whether we provided satisfactory answers to the students' questions
- Not confident that guidance was effective enough to help them achieve their goals
- Was sometimes too busy to provide ample time for explanation, which resulted in students doing only observation
- Other regular duties sometimes prevented carrying out scheduled activities for supervision
- When there was not enough time, supervision during the night shift was not done adequately
- When the amount of work increased and time left for guidance was little, I could not spend much time for the students.
- Supervision would be more effective if the supervisor could spend more time with the same students continuously
- More time to reflect together with students would have been more effective
- Feedback on students' feelings and learning was not done on the same day as their practice, making it difficult to do checking and evaluation.

are thinking in relation to the clinical practice," and "We need to provide guidance starting with basic nursing."

4) Learning and actions of the students : The following were the responses to the question "What do you think the students learned" through the program : "I think it was more educational for the students because there were more opportunities to interact with all kinds of situations than the kind of practice where the main focus is on nursing development using cases," "The students' understanding was much deeper because they directly observed the supervisors in nursing action," "The students were able to see specific care in accordance with individual needs and to look at the ward as the whole," "It was very effective in terms of learning because the students learned the administrative aspect of work shifts," "The range of guidance differed according to the contents of duties for the day, making it difficult to have continuity of guidance," "Because there was no space in the nursing station or patients' rooms where they could rest and relax, stress was observed among the students ; So I assured them that they could make themselves at home."

3. Compatibility between Students and Supervisors in Preceptor ship

Two significant relationships were extracted in the compatibility of supervisors and students in the program as shown in Table 3. One is that the supervisors held positive impressions of the students, such as "positive" and "studious and deepening understanding," while the students held similarly favorable impressions of the supervisors, such as "easy to ask questions" and "friendly," The other is that the supervisors felt negative feelings such as "cumbersome to supervise them" and "do not know how to supervise them," while the students held likewise negative feeling such as "hard to relate to them." In the case of the former, a great deal of positive remarks were made in terms of the students' learning, while in the latter case, there was some distance between the two parties, indicating burden and stress.

Discussion

The duration of the program was only three weeks and the relationship between the student and the supervisor was temporary and based on a specific purpose. Thus the mentorship in the study was rather a

Table 3. Compataibility between Supervisors and Students in Preceptor ship

Compatibility	Supervisors' Impression of Response To Students	Students' Impression and Response to Supervisors
Incompatible	*Felt difficult to teach them	*Felt uncomfortable to interact with them
	*Difficult to grasp their response	*Felt too nervous to ask questions
	*Didn't feel their willingness	*Was not sure how much I wanted to observe
	*Felt tired when being with them all the time	*Found it stressful to accompany the supervisor
	*Felt painful when I didn't interact with them well.	*Felt stressful because I might have been causing stress to the supervisor
	*Wished they had studied in preparation	*Found questionable about the supervisor's care techniques
	*Found them to be passive and wished they had expressed their own goals	
	*Time passed before I knew how to guide them	
Compatible	*Felt their enthusiasm to learn	*Felt friendly
	*They asked questions with some goals in mind	*Was easy to interact with them
	*They came to practice well prepared	*I had meaningful experience
	*They were willing and quick to learn	*Could learn a lot of good care techniques
	*They expressed their opinions and feelings in response my advice	*Could do a wide range of learning not possible in other facilities

simulational one. Lee[11] refers to the role of preceptor as something more than "mentor," "supervisor," or "evaluator." In our study, we approached preceptor ship in the sense that the preceptor ship is something that allows the skilled supervisor to take charge of a student and brings out learning and guidance experience on a one-to-one basis. In the traditional clinical practice, the interaction between the supervisor and the student was rather fragmentary. The terminology might have caused some confusion ; however, the personalized program itself brought forth some good results by enabling some intimacy between the supervisors and the students. At the same time, the evaluation of the supervisors was contrasting between the two parties : many of the students evaluated their supervisors highly while the supervisors themselves felt inadequacy of their own work, revealing the lack of self-confidence on the latter's part.

1. Results from Introduction of Preceptor ship

It was not possible to ascertain any significance in the order or continuity of the seven categories of the students' experiences with the supervisors. When the students' learning was integrated, it was found that the students reviewed their basic nursing skills by observing the supervisors' care. At the same time the students were given advice by their supervisors as to how to give care according to different situations, deepening their understanding of the importance of flexible application of care to different objects. The students also developed further self-image as a nurse by accompanying their supervisors and forming intimate relationships with them. Preceptor ship has a significant implication to improvement of the traditional clinical practice where students take up a particular case and develop nursing. In clinical situations, it is necessary to have an ability to develop care plans according to needs. Yokota[12] proposed clinical learning at university. The present study indicated the importance of having student's experience, as close to their graduation as possible, clinical practice which is not bound by case study based nursing development. The students learned the range, roles and functions of nurses transcending the area of maternal nursing. The mentor-preceptor experience was effective in terms of fulfilling part of the clinical practice goals. Scheduling the practice hours according to the supervisors' availability made it possible for the supervisors to convey more accurate judgment to the students. According to Goldenburg[13] and Iwasiw[14], socialization of professionals enable them to acquire knowledge, roles and actions through a complex,

interactive process. Such a role of the supervisor is reflected as an enthusiastic, one-to-one, action-oriented learning experience taking place between the matured nurse and a beginning nursing student.

On the other hand, the supervisor saw the program as an opportunity to understand the young students' mentality and their concerns as nursing students. As the collaborative relationship between the clinical institutions and educational institutions is proposed[15] today, it becomes important to mutually share educational ideals and goals. It is noteworthy that the program provided an opportunity for the supervisor to better understand the students.

2. Improvements to Make in Relation to Continuation of Preceptor ship

The level and stress and the lack of confidence on the part of the supervisors may be a reflection of the degree of responsibility of those who assume a role of guiding clinical practice students in addition to their daily duties. In Japan, educational institutions do not employ supervisors who assume the role equivalent to the clinical educator in North America[16]. Clinical supervisors are rather few, and, moreover, they are not permanently assigned to clinical institutions. These factors may be the greatest causes to the great amount of burden which clinical supervisors experience. Because of this stress level of mentors or preceptors, Robert et al.[17] point out that hospital ward administrator's role becomes important. The administrators need not only the ability to judge suitability of someone as a supervisor but also the ability to help alleviate the supervisor's stress and burden. In addition, they need the ability to facilitate team learning when they accept students' clinical practice, to lead such a team, and to counsel individual supervisors in response to their stress. When the preceptor ship was introduced in this study, it was assumed that instructors and administrators would assume the supportive role ; however, this role was not smoothly fulfilled. Although the importance of sharing the understanding educational goals and guidance results by both parties, it remains for them to effectively divide the tasks and roles between them. Likewise, matching of students and their supervisors is an important factor, which could greatly affect success of their clinical practice. It would be ideal if students are given choice to choose their supervisors ; however, there is no choice but for administrators and the educational institution to negotiate such selection due to the lack of supervisors and the expected level of burden for the supervisors.

Conclusion

The introduction of preceptor ship into maternity nursing practice resulted in the growth of the students as prospective professionals. For example, their view of nursing was expanded and their concepts were turned into concrete reality ; their basic care skills were reviewed and this learning was applied to their future development ; their motivation to learn was stimulated by practical experiences ; and their awareness of themselves as professionals and nurses was enhanced. As for their supervisors, the program presented an opportunity to rediscover themselves, their learning motivation was stimulated, care phenomena were reviewed, and their relationship with students was positively regarded. The improvement to make for this program was to strengthen the supportive function for those who act as supervisors. Also, when the relationship between the student and the supervisor is incompatible and not intimate, stress tends to be produced, negatively affecting their learning. Therefore, It indicates how important it is for students to have choice to select their own supervisors.

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Preceptor ship 導入による臨床実習の成果と改善に関する研究

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要　　旨

本研究は，母性看護実習における Preceptor ship の効果と改善点を探ることを目的とした。研究対象は目的を説明して承諾の得られた大学３年次で母性看護実習を行う学生34名とその指導者の助産師30名である。調査は学生と助産師の双方から，学習できたこと，人間関係，双方のかかわりについて構成的記述形式をとった。

分析は記載内容を，３名の研究者が文脈にそって解釈しカテゴリーの抽出を行った。その結果，学生の24名（70.6%）は指導者の指導は丁寧で満足であった，と回答したが、指導者の22名（73.3%）は，自分の指導は十分でなかったと評価していた。Preceptor ship 導入に伴う学生の学びには，看護業務の広さを理解できたことに始まり，役割分担や協力，チーム医療の潤滑的機能，対象への柔軟なアプローチ，ケア技術の応用，自己の看護技術の見直し，看護者としての自己像の形成という７カテゴリーが抽出された。一方で，指導者が学生を面倒だと感じた場合や学生が指導者に negative な感情を抱いた場合，双方に負担感やストレスを生じやすいという重要な関係が示された。Preceptor ship は１事例を受け持ち看護展開するという従来の実習方略の検討に一つの示唆を与えた。指導者と学生の適合性は実習効果を左右する重要な要因であることも示唆された。