



Postgraduate Education for Nurses and Midwives on the Example of National Medical Institute of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration

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Abstract

Background: *Postgraduate education and in-service training for nurses and midwives is an important element of the professional development for these groups of healthcare providers crucial to the quality and availability of healthcare. Postgraduate education and in-service training for nurses and midwives are provided by authorized organizations that meet the requirements set forth in the Ordinance of the Minister of Health.*

Objectives: *The aim of the study was to assess the educational level of postgraduate education for nurses and midwives in years 2013–2023.*

Material and methods: *The nursing and midwifery staff employees of the National Medical Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration (PIM MSWiA), formerly the Central Clinical Hospital of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration in Warsaw, were grouped into inpatient treatment (including subordinate outpatient clinics) vs outpatient treatment categories. The analyzed data spanned the period between January 2013 and August 2023.*

Results: *In 2013, only 10 nurses with specialization worked within the outpatient setting as compared to 129 nurses without specialization. By August 2023, the number of nurses and midwives with specialization increased by a factor of five. Regarding the inpatient healthcare group, the number of nurses and midwives without specialization, amounting to 1,043 in 2013, was reduced by half by August 2023. The largest increase in the number of specializations was observed in years 2018–2019 (119 specializations in inpatient treatment and 9 in outpatient treatment).*

Conclusions: *The achieved trend of improving the staff competencies is fully satisfactory, and the direction should be followed by the Institute's management in the future.*

Key words: *postgraduate education, nursing, midwives*

Introduction

Postgraduate education and in-service training for nurses and midwives is an important element of the professional development for these groups of healthcare providers, crucial to the quality and availability of healthcare. In Poland, postgraduate education and in-service training for nurses and midwives are regulated by the 2011 Act on the Professions of Nurse [1] and Midwife along with its implementing regulations [2]. According to the Act, nurses and midwives are under obligation to continuously upgrade their professional knowledge and skills, and have the right to further their professional development in various types of postgraduate education such as specialization/qualification courses and specialized subject training. Specialization courses are aimed at acquiring the skills of a specialist in a particular field of nursing or other healthcare-related areas. Qualification courses provided as part of post-graduate education are aimed at acquiring qualifications to perform specific professional activities. Specialized subject trainings are platforms to improve one's professional qualifications in a specific subject. Postgraduate education and in-service training for nurses and midwives are provided by authorized organizations, such as medical universities, research institutes, post-secondary schools, hospitals, training centers, chambers of nurses and midwives, and other entities that meet the requirements set forth in the Ordinance of the Minister of Health [3, 4]. Postgraduate and in-service training for nurses and midwives is supervised by the Minister of Health who approves the curricula, grants educational licenses, and predefines the minimum number of places available for participants, the maximum quantity of funds allocated per participant, and the maximum amounts allocated for specialization courses.

The professions of a nurse and midwife require continuous continuing education and training. A nurse and a midwife are obliged to perform their professional tasks at the highest possible level for the sake of the patient's well-being. New knowledge, techniques, and methods as implemented in the healthcare in general are subsequently gradually incorporated into the professional activities of nurses and midwives. Along with the legal

provisions, the professional independence of the nurse and the midwife is based on the continuous updating of knowledge and improvement of qualifications [4].

The basic regulations that govern postgraduate education include:

- Act of July 15, 2011 on the professions of nurse and midwife (Journal of Laws 2022, item 2702 [consolidated text]);
- Ordinance of the Minister of Health of 30 September 2016 on the postgraduate training for nurses and midwives (Journal of Laws 2024, item 115 [consolidated text]);
- Ordinance of the Minister of Health dated December 12, 2013 on the list of nursing and health-related fields in which specialization and qualification courses may be conducted (Journal of Laws 2013, item 1562);
- Ordinance of the Minister of Health of 28 February 2017 on the types and scope of preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitative services provided independently by nurses or midwives without a physician's order (Journal of Laws 2017, item 497).

Objective

The aim of the study was to assess the educational level of postgraduate education for nurses and midwives in years 2013–2023.

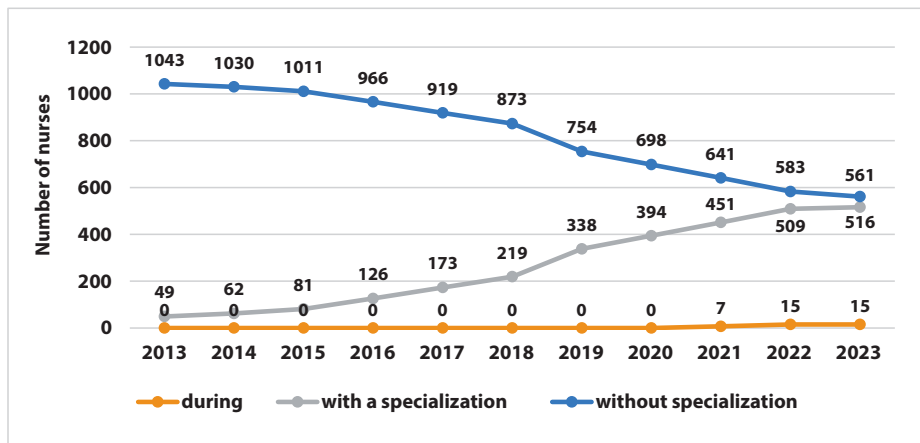
Material and methods

For the purpose of the analysis, the nursing and midwifery staff employees of the National Medical Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration (PIM MSWiA), formerly the Central Clinical Hospital of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration in Warsaw, were grouped into inpatient treatment (including subordinate outpatient clinics) vs outpatient treatment categories. The analyzed data spanned the period between January 2013 and August 2023.

Results

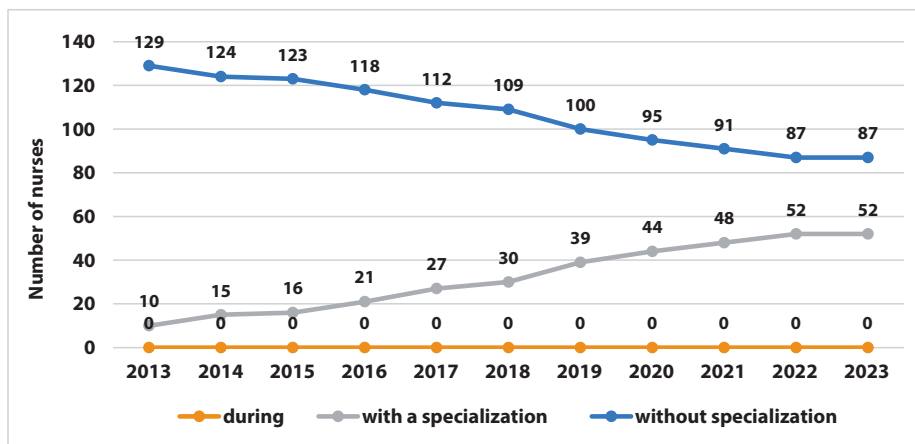
In 2013, only 10 nurses with specialization worked within the outpatient setting as compared to 129 nurses without specialization. By August 2023, the number of nurses and midwives with specialization increased by a factor of five. With regard to the inpatient healthcare group, the number of nurses and midwives without specialization, amounting to 1,043 in 2013, was reduced by half by August 2023. The largest increase in the number of specializations was observed in years 2018–2019 (119 specializations in inpatient treatment and 9 in outpatient treatment). The results are presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Figure 1. Summary of the number of specializations among nurses and midwives in inpatient care



Source: own elaboration.

Figure 2. Summary of the number of specializations among nurses and midwives in outpatient care



Source: own elaboration.

Discussion

Postgraduate trainings for nurses and midwives are conducted in the following forms:

- specialization courses (“specialization”);
- qualification courses;
- specialized subject trainings;
- professional development courses [3].

Postgraduate education, with the exception of professional development courses, is conducted on the basis of curricula developed in consultation with the Supreme Council of Nurses and Midwives and approved by the Minister of Health.

All training programs are provided by the Center for Postgraduate Training of Nurses and Midwives.

The number of training fields available for nurses and midwives has changed over the years. From 2002 to 2012, specialization courses were provided in 25 areas and have been later reduced to 17 areas available today [5].

Based on data published by the Center for Postgraduate Training of Nurses and Midwives (CKPPIP), the most popular specializations in the field include:

- anesthesia and intensive care nursing;
- surgical nursing;
- internal medicine nursing;
- gynecological and obstetric nursing [5].

The increase in the number of specializations was the result of legal regulations regarding the minimum staffing standards for nurses and midwives in hospital wards as a condition for services being contracted by the National Health Fund (NHF). The regulations were aimed at ensuring an adequate level of nursing care adapted to the needs and expectations of patients, as well as to improve the staffing and financial situation of hospitals. The current Polish standards for the employment of nurses and midwives at hospital wards were introduced by the Ordinance of the Minister of Health dated 22 November 2013 on the guaranteed services in the field of hospital treatment (Journal of Laws 2023, item 870 [consolidated text]). The regulation specifies the minimum number of full-time nurses per patient bed, depending on the profile and reference level of the hospital ward [6].

In recent years, i.e., in 2022–2023, the interest in training and specialization courses has slowed down due to the global SARS-CoV-2 epidemic. The importance of education and professional development of the medical and nursing staff has been recognized by the management and the Nurse-in-Chief team at the National Medical Institute of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration (PIM MSWiA) over the past years. Constant updates of professional knowledge so as to keep abreast of rapid medical advances translate into the quality of health care as well as patient safety and satisfaction. It also has an economic aspect as it contributes to reducing the number of legal claims for medical errors. As shown by the data presented herein, the number of nurses and midwives who obtained specialization has increased significantly over the last 10 years. Both outpatient and inpatient settings were included in the analysis as raising the competence of the staff is important at every level of the healthcare institution. Notably, at the National Institute of Medicine,

emphasis is placed on the improvement of not only medical skills but other competencies as well. Many of the staff members have received training in the resolution of conflicts at the workplace; internal training in binding legislation is also held. Refresher courses on nosocomial infections are given regularly, and the data on bedsores as developed by PIM patients are analyzed so that corrective methods can be introduced to improve the quality of medical care. In addition, nurses and midwives participate in targeted trainings such as sonography, immunization, and wound care training. The medical personnel also has the opportunity to participate in free foreign language courses. Due to the reference level of the Institute as a medical facility, foreign language patients are also referred to PIM MSWiA. It is important to note that wages received by employees with specializations are higher than those received by individuals with only basic education in nursing and midwifery. Following the Latin maxim *salus aegroti suprema lex* (“the patient’s welfare is the supreme law”), the Institute’s management places a very strong emphasis on the professional development of members of the personnel along with their job satisfaction and workplace safety.

Conclusions

To sum up, postgraduate education and in-service training for nurses and midwives are subject to dynamic upgrades and modernizations aimed at improving the competencies and qualifications of these professional groups, thereby improving the quality and availability of healthcare. Postgraduate education and in-service training for nurses and midwives should be further supported and promoted as an important part of professional as well as societal development. The achieved trend of improving the staff competencies is fully satisfactory, and the direction should be followed by the Institute’s management in the future.

References

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