

RENAL NURSES' PERCEPTION OF DIALYSIS ASSISTANT IN HONG KONG

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Introduction: Dialysis Assistants (DA) were introduced in our renal unit in year 2001 to meet the increasing demand of dialysis population. DA are employed to relieve the renal nurses from 'non-nursing duties' including technical and house keeping tasks. This paper examines the perceptions of renal nurses who have been working with DA in one of the renal units in Hong Kong.

Objectives: To examine the renal nurses' perceptions on: (1) the role relationship with DA and (2) satisfaction with employment, (3) helpfulness, (4) competency and (5) limitation of DA.

Method: Two-pronged qualitative and quantitative approach using focus group interview and survey with a self-administered questionnaire was adopted.

Results: 19 nurses and 5 DA completed the survey. Renal nurses perceived DA as assistant with clear role delineation. They viewed themselves as supervisors as well as working partners of DA. 30% (n=6) were very satisfied while 60% (n=12) were satisfied with the employment of DA. Main reasons were: DA relieves renal nurses' workload; has good team spirit, mutual respect and flexible. All nurses agreed that DA is helpful at daily work. 95% (n=19) agreed that DA are of great help in preparation and after care of hemodialysis. However, 15% (n=3) of the nurses perceived that DA do not have adequate knowledge and skill for the delegated duties. As for limitation, renal nurses have reservation with DA making decisions without informing nurses due to their limited academic knowledge background.

Conclusions: The role of DA is clearly defined. Nurses are satisfied with the role of DA in relieving their workload. However, nurses' clinical supervision is important due to the limited academic knowledge background of DA. Continuous training should be provided for DA to maintain competency and ensure safety.