

Abstract

UC Davis offers many majors; however, it does not offer an undergraduate Nursing major. This leads students who are interested in the field, to lose this interest despite their potential to complete a nursing major as a graduate student at a nursing school after completing their undergrad. The loss of interest in these students strays them from seeking the help offered by the university specifically for students who are interested in this career path, and thus, preventing them from learning more about what it takes to be a nurse. In order to help students, understand what it means to be a nurse and the rewards this yields, I am going to analyze this profession as its own discourse community. I am hoping this will help motivate interested students in deciding to pursue this profession and in seeking more information because their love for nursing can still be fulfilled even as undergraduates. In order to accomplish this, this paper will analyze two research articles to demonstrate what the learning environment for nurses is and what values are instilled in nursing students early on to ensure they uphold the values of the community. Additionally, one of these research articles will discuss the importance of acquiring knowledge of information technologies, or information-based computer systems, to the nursing community and why this is a requirement for nursing students. Furthermore, this paper will perform a genre analysis of a chapter from *The Fundamentals of Nursing 9th Edition* textbook, to show potential nursing students' what material they will be exposed to and the level of this material. Through this research I have discovered that patient care and satisfaction is the most important goal of this community. Every nurse must have a firm understanding of this goal, as their instructors in nursing school and in workspaces will remind them of this time and again. My research also taught me that every learning method, form of communication, and member of this community serves to satisfy patients and provide optimal nursing care. In conclusion, having this knowledge and understanding the demands in the nursing community may help potential nurses in deciding if they are willing to take on this responsibility.

Introduction

Nursing as a health profession is a very coveted career by many undergraduate students, especially taking into consideration the nursing shortages in the health care world. It is a job centered around the care taking of patients, where the overall goal of each member from this community is: patient safety and satisfaction. Without nurses, doctors would not be able to carry out their jobs as effectively. Nurses are notoriously overworked due to the shortages in nursing staff in hospitals. This is often due to the fact that nursing schools are very competitive, and most colleges do not offer nursing degrees such that as a result of this, most students interested in becoming nurses lose that interest. UC Davis for example, does not offer any nursing majors but does a great job in advising students on the best pathway to take to be competitive enough to get into a great nursing school after the completion of their undergraduate studies. The problem is that not all potential nursing students are aware of these resources and are thus discouraged from pursuing the necessary requirements as undergrads in universities like UCD, subsequently leading to our main problem which is the lack of knowledge regarding the basics of the nursing community, which are highly important in helping these potential nursing students in deciding whether this is a career they would like to pursue.

John Swales, a linguistics professor at the University of Michigan holding a PhD from Cambridge University, defines what he calls a “discourse community” as a specific group of people in academic disciplines or social groups, who share a common goal. In this essay I will analyze nursing as its own discourse community through four of John Swales’ six defining characteristics for identifying a discourse community. The purpose of doing so will not only help set nursing apart as a discourse community, but will also help establish the goals, values, and requirements that members must fulfill in order to be a part of this community. With more information about the prerequisites and the demands nurses must cater to, students will find it easier to enter the nursing field because they are well informed and prepared to understand what is required of nurses as early as undergraduate practices, nursing school, and finally in the rewarding setting of a hospital or clinic. Thus, this will also benefit the shortage of nursing staff, as more students interested in nursing become aware of what it means to take on the responsibility of providing essential care to patients. This will provide a solution to our problem by equipping potential nursing students with a basic understanding of the nursing discourse community such that they will either make a decision on pursuing this profession or not, as well as even motivate them to seek out more resources and information that will further aid them in taking this step.

Methods

This paper will analyze the forms of communication in nursing as a discourse community through an analysis of 2 scholarly articles and one chapter from a nursing textbook. The first scholarly article is a research paper conducted by Helen Melander, a Senior Lecturer in Education and Associate Professor in Education at the Uppsala University in Sweden. This study, titled “Becoming a “Good Nurse”: Social Norms of Conduct and Management of Interpersonal Relations”, is founded on the observation of a few students at a nursing school in Sweden and the forms of communication they are taught early on as nursing students, as well as why some forms of communication, though normal to non-nurses, may be offensive within the nursing community. This article will prove important to potential nursing students because it emphasizes the importance of patient care as a fundamental to the nursing practice, therefore students who understand and accept this crucial requirement, will be best suited to pursue this career path. In addition, more than vocal communication, students must learn that a good understanding in information technologies is another form of required communication and participatory mechanism within the nursing community. This is why the second scholarly article I will be analyzing will look into a study about the strengths and weaknesses of information technology courses in both undergraduate and graduate nursing studies to give an example of its importance and emphasis as a prerequisite for students. This article is titled “Nursing Informatics Competencies: Assessment of Undergraduate and Graduate Nursing Students”, and was conducted by Jeungok Choi (RN, MPH, PhD) a Registered Nurse and Assistant Professor of the School of Nursing at the University of Massachusetts, and by Jean E De Martinis (PhD, FNP-BC) an Associate Professor of the School of Nursing at the University of Massachusetts. Finally, in order to understand the context of the curriculum, this paper will conduct a genre analysis of a nursing textbook to study purpose and effectiveness of this writing. This textbook, titled *The Fundamentals of Nursing Ninth Edition*, was written by Patricia A. Potter, Anne Griffin Perry,

Patricia Stockert, and Amy Hall all of which are Registered Nurses, hold PhD's, and have written various editions of *The Fundamentals of Nursing* textbooks. The chapter I will be analyzing is from Unit 1 of the textbook: Nursing and the Health Care Environment, titled "Evidence-Based Practice". By analysis of this chapter, I will be providing potential nursing students with a look into what the textbooks they will be reading look like and how various methods of writing are used to achieve the goals of this textbook. This will help students understand the level of study material nurses are exposed to and help them know what to expect on their path to this career. In short, the analysis of communication within and outside of the nursing community will help students seeking out this career to have a better understanding of nursing fundamentals based on levels of communication.

Results and Discussion

Broadly Agreed Set of Common Public Goals

According to the first of Swales' six defining characteristics for identifying a discourse community, it is highly important that the community shares a common goal(s) (Swales 220). Both Melander and Choi and De Martinis emphasized the importance of patient care and satisfaction as the shared common goal of nurses everywhere. The rest of Swale's characteristics serve strictly to fulfill this purpose

As an example, Melander directly observed the learning environment at a nursing school and recorded how they are taught nursing principles, emphasizing the necessity of strict incorporation of this common principle into a nursing student's mentality as a major key to their studies. Her study notes through section titles such as, "Interaction Competence and Participation in Situated Practices" and "The Patient as a Cognitive and Feeling Subject", how crucial it is for nursing students to grasp the importance of patient's safety and satisfaction before dealing with real patients in a clinical setting considering they will be responsible for human lives. The matter of knowing when and when not to speak, as well as with whom, when and how, is emphasized when it comes to dealing with patients considering if you disclose any information or simply say something unsettling, this can damage a patient's health. It is important to note that as a nurse, you ought to be extremely watchful of what you say and do when dealing with patients. The importance of this trait is emphasized by this study such that you must embrace this mentality even before your actual interaction with patients. This means that as you practice nursing care, you must learn to treat practice mannequins the same way you expect to treat a living patient, showing that this principle isn't taken lightly. Therefore, speech and interaction are heavily monitored specifically to ensure that the goal within the nursing community is achieved which is to ensure the overall well-being and satisfaction of your patients. It is very important to understand that as a nurse you are responsible for upholding this goal before committing to this community.

Furthermore, Melander notices in her observations that the term "patient" is heavily instilled into the vocabulary of nursing students because it is the goal of the instructor to make sure that by using this term, the student is fully aware that the patient isn't viewed as an object for medical practice but that they are an actual "living person" [2017]. This once again furthers the knowledge of the common goal, to ensure that the patient is safe at all times by acknowledging that they are a living person. This also ties in with the idea that speech and

behavior are strictly monitored, especially because the way you address a patient has to portray your understanding of their situation since they have “cognitive and emotive capacities” and it is crucial to treat them like so [2017]. This is so critically important that if a student is seen to be joking around a practice mannequin meant to be a patient or a student participating as a patient, they are immediately scolded for it. Melander notes a student who was having trouble inserting a needle into the vessel of a mockup arm when the student eventually grows tired and jokingly asks a classmate to borrow his arm as practice for needle insertion. Immediately, the students’ instructor lectures them about how this is not acceptable in a real-world setting, one cannot simply ask another patient for their arm if they are having trouble inserting a needle into the arm of the patient who actually needs the injection. This embraces the idea that patients are so important, nursing students do not have the leeway to joke around in their practices outside of a real-world setting. Therefore, it is necessary for a nursing student to remain serious when it comes to treating a patient and to keep in mind that the patient is a living person who has worries and who’s health is sensitive. Failure to do so will jeopardize your upholding of the community’s common goal as you may put a patient’s well-being in danger.

From the strict monitoring of language and behavior during nursing school to a clinical setting, to understanding the unwelcomed slack that comes from joking, as a nursing student you must understand and accept the seriousness of the responsibility you are to take on as a member of this discourse community.

Mechanisms of Intercommunication/ Participatory Mechanisms

Swales mentions that discourse communities often share mechanisms of intercommunication with members of the group as a valid form of inclusion within the community, as his second out of the six principles in defining a discourse community [221]. For the nursing discourse community, some of the most important forms of intercommunication among members include informatics competencies & interpersonal communication with team members and patients. Additionally, this discourse community also strongly reflects Swales’ third principle, which is the use of “participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback” [221]. They use participatory mechanisms like information technologies to provide information and feedback to the rest of the community, because this is how they log information relevant to improving nursing care among other things which are accessible to other members.

Nursing Informatics Competencies

Going to routine checkups with your local health care provider, visiting the hospital or emergency room, I am sure you and I have witnessed nurses taking our personal data such as: allergies to medicines, past health histories, preferred pharmacist, blood pressure, etc., and proceed to log this information among others, into a computer. Sometimes nurses will perform this step in the room you’re being attended in and other times you will see them working on computers as you’re being checked in. The entering and retrieving of this data is a form of communication which as a nurse, you must learn to do in order to successfully understand and communicate with other nurses working with the same patient as well as with the patient’s doctor. This is how nurses use mechanisms of intercommunication as participatory mechanisms to provide feedback in order to ensure their patient is thoroughly cared for. Additionally, by

proper use of information technologies, they are able to provide feedback to other nurses who may need some aid in caring for their patient.

In this study conducted by Choi and De Martinis, the authors highlight the importance of learning information technologies as early as undergraduate school as an important form of communication for nurses. Information technologies refers to the systems in a computer which store large quantities of information from which specific groups like the nursing community can access, update, or send information. The authors of the study state that learning to use information technologies is important in promoting safe and evidence-based nursing care to patients, showing that information technologies improve nursing care (Choi and De Martinis). The reason why competency in information technologies is highly important to this community is because nurses document patient history and data through software programs, like the popular Electronic Health Records (EHR) system. Systems like these are accessible to other nurses and doctors in different clinics or hospitals around the world because it may provide new or improved methods of caring for rare cases or even old cases. These software programs also serve to document special cases that may be of learning experience to nurses elsewhere in the world [2013]. Healthcare information technologies help to deliver knowledge to and from other nurses, emphasizing Swales' characterization of participatory mechanisms, therefore learning how to handle such technological programs and maneuvers is an essential skill you will have to acquire on your path to nursing.

Furthermore, his study evaluates the focus that both undergraduate and graduate programs in nursing place on generating a strong competency in students in the practice of information technologies. They surveyed 289 students altogether on a competency scale, where students scored themselves based on their own confidence in these skills. Below is an image of what this survey looked like and what the categories of the competency scale looked like. In the end, the study concluded that nursing students were confident in their basic computer skills such as internet surfing and typing but were not confident in areas like applied computer skills & clinical informatics, which are necessary skills to have when dealing with information technologies in the nursing community [2013]. The authors of the study suggest a few tips on how to ensure informatics competencies among students and how to strengthen their curriculum to ensure that each student is well acquainted with the topic, thus reinstating the importance of learning this communication skill. All students, however, recognize the benefit informatics has in the nursing community when it comes to optimal patient care. As demonstrated, information technologies are widely implemented within this community for communication, therefore it is important for potential nurses such as yourself to understand that you will have to commit to acquiring this skill if you are to effectively communicate with other nurses.

Competency scale	Undergraduate students		Graduate students		Independent t-test ^a	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
Total (30 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.96$)	3.01	0.72	3.23	0.70	2.35	0.02
Basic computer knowledge and skills (15 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.94$)	3.35	0.75	3.39	0.75	0.37	0.09
Applied computer skills (four items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$)	2.03	0.96	2.22	0.96	1.53	0.13
Clinical informatics role (five items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$)	2.24	0.91	2.84	0.85	5.16	<0.001
Clinical informatics attitude (four items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$)	3.66	0.92	4.10	0.79	3.98	<0.001
Wireless device skills (two items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$)	3.00	1.34	3.36	1.12	2.26	0.02

Figure 1: Survey set up and visual of the foundation of self-assessment nursing students participated in.

Fundamentals of Nursing: Communication

Communication among members of this community is also highlighted in the “Communication” chapter of the *Fundamentals of Nursing* textbook. It is important for nurses to develop communication skills because the job requires members of this community to not only effectively communicate with patients and their families, but with other nurses as well. Therefore, the relationships formed between nurses and their patients and between nurses and other nurses, is crucial for collecting data, “providing education, and interacting during nursing interventions”, in order to ensure that miscommunication or lack of does not jeopardize your patient’s health [316]. For the safety of the patients, it is important for team members to communicate effectively because patients often go from one nurse to another. Each must know the health history of the patient as well as any other information in order to reduce the risk of errors and increase health and satisfaction outcomes in patients [316]. Therefore, it is important to note that you must be able to communicate with others and not be afraid to do so, as the well-being of your patient depends on it.

Shared Lexis

John Swales also characterizes a discourse community as having a shared lexis, or specialized vocabulary, specific to the community [222]. In this case, nursing as a medical profession and its own discourse community, not only has abbreviations and acronyms as a part of its lexis but consists of a large set of terms in which where it is required to learn the breakdown/meaning of an entirely new vocabulary. Having taken courses in medical terminology and observing nurses at work, it is clear that there are many medical terms a nurse

must know in order to deliver optimal care to their patients. This means heavy studying of prefixes, suffixes and roots for medical conditions, body anatomy, medicine, etc., in order to successfully communicate the situation of a patient and figure out the best strategic treatment. For example, you must know that the suffix -itis means inflammation of, which is one of the most common suffixes in this field. The root word rhin- means nose, therefore when someone has inflammation in the mucous membrane of the nose, you would call this rhinitis, using the root word for nose and the suffix for inflammation. Simple definitions like this would help fellow nurses and doctors to determine the severity of a case and thus be able to provide you with the proper course of action. Some words may not sound like the body part they are associated with at all which makes learning these terms all the more difficult. However, others sound exactly like what they are associated with. Furthermore, a nurse has to master the abbreviated terms as well. Some of these include simple terms like BP, which stand for blood pressure, while others include terms like IPF which stands for Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis (a specific lung disease). It is a large list of words you will be responsible for learning and memorizing, however, with practice you'll come to realize it is easier than it looks. Below I have provided an image that will show how these words are broken down and what the learning of medical terminology will look like in your journey.

Introduction To Medical Terminology

- Medical Terms Involving Surgical Procedures:
 - Examples:

<i>appendectomy</i>				
<u>Prefix</u>	+	<u>Root</u>	+	<u>Suffix</u>
(no prefix)	+	(append)	+	(ectomy)
(no prefix)	+	appendix	+	removal of

<i>pericardiotomy</i>				
<u>Prefix</u>	+	<u>Root</u>	+	<u>Suffix</u>
(peri)	+	(cardi/o)	+	(tomy)
around	+	heart	+	incision

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Figure 2: Medical Terminology as a Lexis

Genre Analysis

Based on another of Swales' six defining principles that make up a discourse community, a discourse community "utilizes one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims", one of this community's communicative genres is the factual deliverance of information via textbooks [221]. For genre analysis of this community, I am going to analyze a nursing textbook titled *Fundamentals of Nursing*, which will help demonstrate exactly how nursing material is presented to the nursing student as well as how this textbook is organized in order to

show potential nurses what they will be exposed to as a nurse in training. We know that the purpose of this textbook is to teach by informing students about the basics of nursing which may include history, moral values, practice, and critical information about how to treat patients. You can expect to read textbooks like these before applying to nursing school, during, and maybe even after nursing school.

The first thing we encounter in this textbook, like all others, is a contents page. A few units in the contents page of this textbook are presented as follows: Unit 1: Nursing and the Health Care Environment and Unit 2: Caring Throughout the Life Span. Below I have provided a more detailed image of the contents page which gives a basic outlook as to how this nursing textbook is set up.

The units and topics found in the contents page of the Fundamentals of Nursing, show just about enough to give us a hint as to what nurses will be learning. We can see that, though learning about patient care and safety is the most important task nurses have, they must learn about other topics, such as the history of nursing and ethical foundations of nursing along with patient care. This genre is important to this community because their goal can only be fulfilled through learning. This means learning everything from the ethical values which they must honor, to learning about the physiology of patients in a clinical environment. All these topics thoroughly covered in this textbook serve to equip nursing students with as much knowledge as possible to ensure that when they are dealing with a human life, they are doing everything in their power to ensure their safety and satisfaction. Below I will analyze a chapter of this textbook titled Evidence-Based Practice.

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Figure 3: Contents Page of Textbook: Fundamentals of Nursing

Evidence Based Practice

It is important to note that this chapter begins with a small introduction to the chapter set around a scenario featuring a registered nurse who is good at their job but is faced with a situation in which where they are confronted with an issue dealing with choosing to practice nursing based on tradition or nursing based on evidence. It is clear that the main point is to not only introduce the highlights of the textbook but to inform nurses that when it comes to the highest quality of care to patients, it is okay to step away from restrictions put in place by tradition and employ new approaches backed up by evidence, especially scientific evidence no matter if tradition has always practiced a certain approach for years [52]. The use of this scenario serves to depict a real-life scenario in which nurses can understand what type of questions they will be dealing with in situations like this, and thus the chapter will answer the questions and doubts nurses may have. This technique is effective in capturing the reader's attention and also providing them with a subtle synopsis of the chapter.

Furthermore, the book and chapter directly address the reader as a nurse by using the term "you" as their subject, making it clear that they are the audience. In "The Need for Evidence-Based Practice", a section of the chapter, the form in which nurses are addressed is pretty clear, "As a professional nurse you are accountable and responsible for providing the best

nursing care possible”, showing that this is a special technique used by the textbook to make it clear that as the nurse who’s reading the information, it is important for you to be aware that this factual information applies specifically to you and should be treated as so [52]. Additionally, the subject is also addressed as “you” when dangers of malpractice are mentioned, for example, “When your care is not evidence based, your patients will sometimes experience poor outcomes”, presents how the reader is addressed for the purpose of showing them that they are or will be responsible for providing care [53]. If they employ a non-evidence-based approach, they may be putting their patient’s health at risk. Some examples may be a worsening of the patient’s health or even their discontent with your care, which may in turn lead to poor health outcomes.

Aside from the general set up of a textbook, in terms of headings within the chapter followed by factual information, the chapter employs the use of images in order to better illustrate the meaning of assessing an evidence-based practice. These images show scientists, doctors, and nurses at work as a way of showing how evidence-based approaches travel by way of science and medicine. Below is an image from the textbook that shows the focal information of the textbook summarized through an illustration. The purpose is to provide students with a different approach or a switch from reading to visualization of the information in order to help the members of this community better grasp the topic.

Figure 4: This Image Summarizes a Few Steps in Making Evidence-Based Decisions.

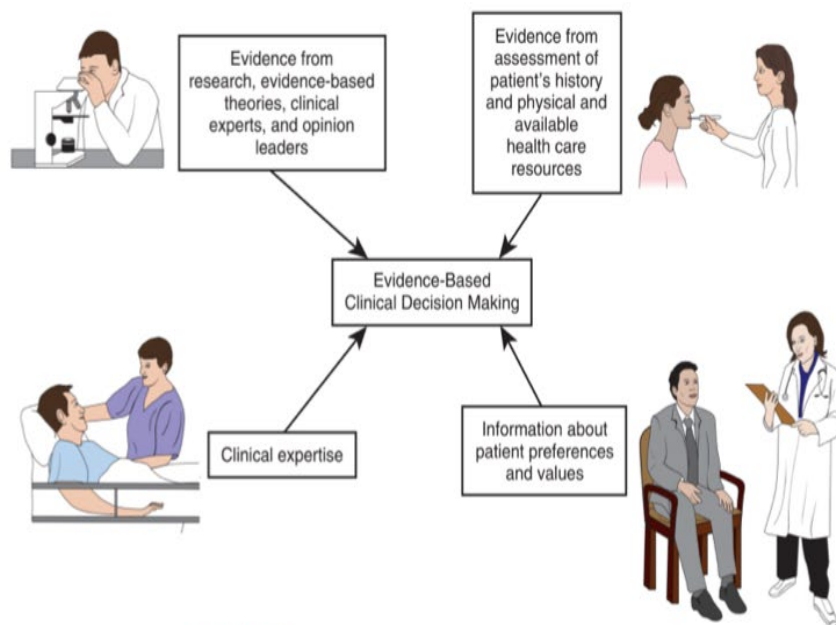


FIGURE 5-1 Model for evidence-based clinical decision making.

Conclusion

Potential nurses at UC Davis interested in joining this discourse community are now equipped with a little more knowledge on the requirements and expectations of this community. In analyzing the common goal and mechanisms of intercommunication of this discourse community, it is clear that anyone wishing to integrate themselves within the community, must be willing to take on the serious responsibility of caring for human lives. Additionally, they must

be willing to do anything within their capabilities, which they are heavily equipped with through their preparations in school, nursing programs, and textbook learning, in order to uphold the values of the community. Based on my findings, I understand what it takes to be a nurse and why this discourse community works so hard to uphold their values. Furthermore, these findings provide a comforting explanation as to why the healthcare world so heavily relies on nurses. Though there is a lot of pressure that comes with being a nurse, knowing the extent to which they are taught the importance of patient safety makes it clear that even though it may be a demanding job, nursing is a very rewarding career.

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