

International Committee of Military Medicine Conference Abstract Submission

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Title – How is the perception of professional identity formed amongst military nurses working in clinically facing roles

Summary

Professional identity is defined as “The attitudes, morals, values, knowledge, beliefs and skills that are shared with others in a professional group”. Within nursing, it is a nurse’s concept of how they function professionally, and the meaning they attribute to the profession, and what it means to be part of that profession.

Appearing to have a direct impact on the quality of care we provide our patients, until now how nurses form their professional identity has been little understood. However, through a scoping study undertaken as part of an MSc¹, and subsequent doctoral study², the limited evidence base was built upon and has now been operationalised to support nurses in the military, and beyond into the civilian sector in forming their professional identities.

Methods-Results

The MSc study which underpins this work undertook 6 semi-structured interviews, and 23 ethnographic conversations to establish how UK nurses working within a UK Emergency Care environment formed their professional identity. Negating some criticisms of previous work.

Following a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts, this study ethnographically triangulated the data (including the ethnographic conversations), current research and utilising auto-ethnography from the authors own professional identity as an ED nurse. From this, five separate themes (Table 1), with associated subthemes were elicited. All of which were felt by participants to either positively or adversely impact how nurses formed their professional identity.

A subsequent systematic review as part of the authors doctoral study indicates that these findings are both transferable and generalisable to a military population, and

¹ MSc Dissertation - A Qualitative and ethnographic approach to understand how emergency care nurses form their perception of their professional identity

² How do Army NCO nurses form their perception of their professional identity: A systematic review of the literature

potentially across professions, particularly doctors and nurses, and work is currently ongoing with overseas partners to understand if this work is generalisable to nurses from other nations.

Conclusions

A nurse's perception of their professional identity has been shown to directly impact patient outcomes, the patient experience and the standard of patient care.

With primary research providing some elucidation as to how Emergency Care nurses form their professional identity, and the outputs of a subsequent systematic review demonstrating generalisability and transferability to the military sector, we are well placed to start operationalising this early research, to support our clinical colleagues with their professional identity formation.