

## Understanding the concept of empathy in relation to nursing

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### ABSTRACT

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**Purpose:** To understand the concept of empathy by nurses, get to know the importance of empathy in performance the work of a nurse and to determine the ability of empathy among nurses.

**Materials and methods:** The study group consisted of 100 nurses (females and males) working in hospitals and clinics in Mazovia province. The control group consisted of 100 persons engaged in office work. A diagnostic survey method was used in the research. The research tools were: Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Emotional Control Scale and a questionnaire prepared by the team concerning the concept of empathy in the opinion of nurses and presenting their opinion on the importance of empathy in personal contact with the patient.

**Results:** The level of knowledge on empathy among nurses is on the average level. The average score on this scale was 17.35 (SD=3.40). Almost 85% of the respondents claimed that empathy is equal with compassion shown to the other person - the patient. Empathy was often confused with the

show of compassion. There are significant differences between the level of empathy of nurses and the control group. The differences relate to the results in the scale of perspective-taking and the scale of empathic concern. Nurses often are able to feel the experience of others, and appear to concern the other ( $p < 0.05$ ). Understanding empathy is associated with more frequent displaying the feeling of anger. This is a positive feature, because those people had a better self-awareness and their experiences, including anger. They could express it on the outside, usually in the socially acceptable way. It was similar with those who were convinced of the positive impact of experiencing emotions during the healing process.

**Conclusions:** Empathy is a positive factor influencing the quality of conducted nursing work. Steps should be taken to introduce workshops of interpersonal skills as a module in the nurses' training course.

**Key words:** Understanding, concept empathy, nurses

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