

PROFESSIONAL VALUES HELD BY REGISTERED NURSES

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Problem & Purpose: Advances in technology, proliferation of medical and scientific knowledge, and expansion of nursing roles have created complex and unexplored ethical and moral dilemmas for professional registered nurses. Professional values are essential to guide the delivery of nursing care and decision-making in health care. The purpose of this study was to determine factors that influence the values orientation of registered nurses.

Method: A non-experimental survey research design was utilized to examine the five research questions. A random sample of 2000 registered nurses across the United States who were members of the American Nurses Association (ANA) were mailed surveys with a total of 487 (24.35%) responses received. Data were collected using the Nurses Professional Value Scale (NPVS), which is a 44 item norm-referenced instrument based on the American Nurses' Association Code for Nurses developed by Weis and Schank.

Findings: The sample was predominantly female (92.4%), with an age range of 25-72 (mean of 47.7). Caucasian respondents made up 78% of the sample with African-American 8.4%, Hispanic 4.3%, Asian/Pacific Islander 4.3% and Native American and Others 2.0%. Sixty-eight per cent were married.

Values related to safeguarding the patient's privacy (mean = 4.40), respect for human dignity (mean = 4.37) and being responsible and accountable for nursing actions (mean = 4.32) were identified as most important to the RNs. Advanced education positively correlated with the NPVS ($r = .15$, $p = .002$, $N = 403$). Time elapsed since the RN completed their basic nursing education program correlated with higher NPVS scores ($r = .16$, $p = .001$, $N = 390$). There were no differences in value scores identified attributable to ethnicity ($F = .68$, $df 5$, $p = .64$). There were no differences in value scores attributable to work roles ($F = 1.7$, $df 7$, $p = .11$).

Discussion: The RNs responding to this survey were demographically similar to all U.S. RNs except they were more highly educated, with over 66% having a masters or higher degree and they were more likely to be in an advanced practice role. RNs with more education &/or more years in nursing scored higher on the NPVS than those with less. No differences in NPVS values scores were found between nurses by ethnicity, sex, or nursing role.

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