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The attitudes of early and late stage nursing students towards the elderly and the teaching of gerontological nursing in a university of applied sciences – a survey study

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The purpose of this study is to determine the attitudes of early and late stage nursing students towards the elderly and elderly care, and chart student perceptions of the teaching of gerontological nursing. The data were collected by total sampling using Kogan's (1961) attitudes scale and open questions from the nursing students (N=1100) of a single university of applied sciences in Spring 2015. The response rate of the electronic survey was 47.5%. The students' attitudes towards the elderly were fairly positive. Out of the individual variables, the individuality of the elderly received the highest score from both groups. The oldest early stage students had a more positive view of the elderly's cognitive functions and found the presence of elderly people comfortable. Late stage students over the age of 30 considered the elderly more independent than the other respondents. Early stage nursing students wished that gerontological nursing would be taught at real institutions of elderly care that would allow the students to interact with the elderly. Late stage students discussed the contents of gerontological teaching. They wanted more instructions on encountering patients with a memory sickness or a mental illness and the special questions of medicinal care. The students also wanted more consideration of the timing and quality of practical training, as the experiences gained during it influence students' attitudes towards elderly care. The results give exact targets for development in the teaching of gerontological nursing.

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