

# Recognition for the Delegation of Nursing Jobs in Korea

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## Abstract

This study was done to identify the general recognition for the nursing jobs can be delegated to nurse aides and compare for recognition between college students and public. Participants were 288 college students and 99 people. Data were analyzed by SPSS 18.0 using descriptive statistics. The nursing jobs of highest score that can be delegated to nurse aides were "Assist movement" (3.29 ± 0.68). The next jobs were "Assist dining" (3.24 ± 0.71), "Assist ambulation" (3.20 ± 0.71) in order. But the nursing jobs of lowest score that can be delegated to nurse aides were "Opium therapy nursing care" (1.84 ± 0.98). The next jobs were "Intra venous inject" (1.86 ± 1.00), "Intra muscle inject" (1.90 ± 0.98), "Transfusion" (1.90 ± 0.99), in order. The nursing jobs of highest recognition gap between college students and public was "Opium therapy nursing care" (t=4.720, p=0.000). The next jobs were "Intra-venous inject" (t=4.482, p=0.000), "Anticoagulant medication" (t=4.379, p=0.000), "Nutrition for dialysis patients" (t=4.033, p=0.000) in turns. Subjects were recognized that nursing jobs to assist or help for patients to move or dine can be delegated to nurse assistants. But critical or dangerous nursing jobs like as opium management or IV and IM medications cannot be delegated. IV or IM medication has been doing by nurse assistants in Local hospital or clinic. Which nursing jobs can be done by or delegated to nurse assistants must be studied and mandated in Law.

**Keywords:** Delegation, Jobs, Nursing, Nurse Aides, Recognition

## 1. Introduction

Nursing jobs has expanded in hospital clinics and communities and a variety of professional nurses have appeared in Korea. Nurses are playing nurse roles as independent medical experts in a number of health sectors<sup>6</sup>. However, there are no laws or statutes that specifically refer to nursing jobs or govern the nurse roles<sup>3</sup>.

Nurse shortage has been continued since the Korea War, so legislation that allowed the replacement of nurse with nurse aides came into force in 1973. Many hospitals could hire low-wage nurse aides and let them take the duties of nurses whether or not the duties are risky or not. This has made the border of the tasks ambiguous between nurses and nurse aides, and has increased the conflicts and problems between the two groups over this matter<sup>2,7</sup>. Recently, nurse aides demanded another type

of nursing job called a practical nurse and tried change the laws.

The same process as the current realities facing Korea was discussed in the 1980s in New Brunswick, Canada, and there was a conflict of roles and delegation of nurse aides. Concerned about the possible deterioration of nursing due to simple training and education and low capability and responsibility, there was a discussion about to what extent the patient's care should be delegated. After all, a legal means was sought to regulate the job of nurse aides<sup>5</sup>.

Most Koreans do not know the difference of the roles and tasks between nurses and nurse aides. If the legislation is made to allow new nursing positions to nursing aides, most medium and small hospitals will legally hire nurse aides instead of nurses, which will cause the drop in the standard and quality of care, resulting in the threat to the

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right of health of the people. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the difference of the duties between nurses and nurse aides and to clearly define the roles and tasks between the two groups by law, reflecting the actual nursing field. To this aim, it would be necessary to find what extent the health care consumers allow the delegation, considering general public consensus and the clinical realities.

The purpose of this study is to identify the public awareness to what extent the duties of nurses may be delegated nurse aides in practical nursing field, and to reveal the perception gap between the public and college students who will play the backbone of the next generation.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Study Subjects and Ethical Consideration

The subjects of this study were sampled from college students and public residing in Ccity, Chungcheongnam-do, Korea. A total of 387 subjects including 288 students and 99 publics who understood the purpose, procedure and method of the study and agreed to participate in the study were convenience sampled.

G\*power 3.1 program was used for the calculation with a medium effect size, significant levels of 0.5 and the power of the test .95; the result showed that the minimum number of subject was 138 people, demonstrating a sufficient sampling has been made.

### 2.2 Research Variables

In this study, a survey was conducted using a self-report questionnaire, which contained 59 questions on the nursing jobs that were actually performed by nurse aides in clinics or hospitals, or that were considered delegable to nurse aides at a general level. Regarding the questions for the survey, 168 nursing actions were extracted from the study of Yoon & Kim (2013)<sup>9</sup> and Park, Whang & Lee (1992)<sup>4</sup> first, followed by the content validation from 2 nursing professors, and final selection of 59 items that meet C.V.I 80 percent or more.

### 2.3 Method of Data Analysis

The data used in this study were analyzed by SPSS 18.0 using descriptive statistics like as mean, SD, frequency and percent. Independent sample t-test was used for difference between the two groups (public, students).

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 Results

Nursing jobs that have got most responses to be delegable include 'Assist movement ( $3.23 \pm 0.68$ )', 'Assist dining ( $3.24 \pm 0.71$ )' and 'Assist ambulation ( $3.20 \pm 0.71$ )' in order from greatest to least. The fifth most response was 'Environment management ( $3.13 \pm 0.76$ )' such as ward temperature and humidity control, and the third most was 'cleaning ( $3.01 \pm 0.88$ )' that was the most common work of aides or ward assistants in tertiary hospitals. 'Change clothes and linen ( $2.89 \pm 0.9$ )' was the 20th, and 'check vital signs including BP ( $2.78 \pm 0.91$ )' that was being performed mainly in hospitals was the 27th.

On the other hand, among the tasks that cannot be mandated to nurse aides, 'Opium therapy nursing care ( $1.84 \pm 0.98$ )' showed the lowest score, and 'Intra venous injection ( $1.86 \pm 1.00$ )', 'Intra muscle injection ( $1.90 \pm 0.98$ )', 'Transfusion ( $1.90 \pm 0.99$ )', 'Intradermal injection ( $1.90 \pm 0.97$ )', 'anticoagulant medication ( $1.93 \pm 0.97$ )' and 'chemotherapy care ( $1.94 \pm 0.98$ )' followed the order, which revealed the fact that tasks such as blood transfusion and delivery of important drugs including narcotics showed in Table 1.

Perceptions about delegable tasks of nurses between students and public differed in every medication such as 'Opium therapy nursing care ( $t = 4.720, p = 0.000$ )', 'Intra-venous injection ( $t = 4.482, p = 0.000$ )' and 'Anticoagulant medication' ( $t = 4.379, p = 0.000$ ), and 'Nutrition for dialysis patients ( $t = 4.033, p = 0.000$ )' showed in Table 2. College students were more aware than public that the risky or critical nursing jobs are easier to delegate.

### 3.2 Discussion

Among the nursing tasks that are delegable, 'Assist movement ( $3.23 \pm 0.68$ )', 'Assist dining', 'Assist ambulation' and 'Environment management' got high scores from the highest in order. These practices are mostly performed by nurse aides in nursing facilities or home care services as well as upper general hospitals. Main tasks of nurse aides or ward assistants in medical institutions such as 'cleansing' and 'check vital signs include BP' scored the 9th and 27th respectively, scoring lower than mobility aids. The reason of lower scores seems that 'cleaning' was less recognized for its importance because it was not the task that provided direct nursing, and that 'check vital signs including BP' was considered to be routine nursing jobs.

As the nursing tasks that cannot be delegated to nurse aides, ‘Opium therapy nursing care’ scored the highest, followed by ‘Intra venous injection,’ ‘Intra muscle inject,’ ‘Transfusion,’ ‘Intradermal injection,’ ‘anticoagulant medication’ and ‘chemotherapy care.’ in order. In clinical practices, tasks such as ‘Transfusion,’ ‘chemotherapy care’ and ‘anticoagulant medication’ are more risky than simple ‘Intra venous injection’ or ‘Intra muscle inject,’ but ‘Opium therapy’ scored the highest awareness in this response. The reason seems that the risk was recognized

by some mass media reporting intoxication accidents from psychotropic drugs such as propofol.

Certified Nursing Assistants of USA and Canada are known to perform tasks such as measuring the vital signs, hygiene works such as bathing and hair care and clean care of wards and labs<sup>5</sup>. The aides must report patients’ abnormal symptoms or behaviors, and complaints to the nurses, and are required to apply dressings, slings, stockings and support bandages under the supervision of a nurse or doctor. It is regulated that professional medical

**Table 1.** Recognition for delegation of nursing jobs

No.	Variables	Mean	SD	No.	Variables	Mean	SD
1	Assist movement	3.23	0.68	31	Mouth care	2.71	0.86
2	Assist dining	3.24	0.71	32	Prevention to fall down	2.70	0.88
3	Assist ambulation	3.20	0.71	33	Shaving & cleansing skin	2.69	0.88
4	Assist wheel chair movement	3.16	0.74	34	Change dressing	2.65	0.98
5	Control room temperature	3.13	0.76	35	Sterilize medical appliance	2.64	0.93
6	Shampoo	3.12	0.76	36	Postral drainage	2.56	0.86
7	Check height, weight	3.04	0.83	37	Isolation infected patient	2.53	1.01
8	Assist cast care	3.02	0.79	38	Taking inventory	2.51	0.97
9	Cleaning room	3.01	0.88	39	Oxygen therapy	2.43	0.99
10	Help sleeping	2.99	0.79	40	Enema	2.41	0.97
11	encourage cough & deep breathing	2.99	0.80	41	Explain medical test	2.41	0.99
12	Change position	2.98	0.77	42	Perineal care	2.39	0.92
13	Manage vomiting	2.98	0.84	43	Oral medication	2.33	0.93
14	Fire prevention	2.98	0.85	44	Eye drops	2.28	0.93
15	sitz bath	2.97	0.79	45	Stoma care	2.28	0.91
16	bed bath	2.94	0.83	46	Tube feeding	2.26	0.93
17	Guide admission/discharge	2.91	0.88	47	Pre/post op medication	2.21	0.99
17	apply hot/ice bag	2.91	0.88	48	Insert suppository	2.19	0.92
19	Sampling stool	2.90	0.87	49	Endotracheal suction	2.16	0.92
20	Change clothes and linen	2.89	0.90	50	Hemodialysis care	2.15	1.02
21	Apply humidifier	2.88	0.81	51	Catheterization	2.03	0.98
22	Sampling urine	2.88	0.87	52	Nutrition for dialysis patients	2.02	1.00
23	Change diaper & skin care	2.86	0.84	53	Chemotherapy nursing care	1.94	0.98
24	Take inventory	2.84	0.88	54	Anticoagulant medication	1.93	0.97
25	Teach breast feeding	2.82	0.86	55	Intra dermal inject	1.90	0.98
26	Suicide prevention	2.79	0.90	56	Transfusion	1.90	0.99
27	Check vital sign	2.78	0.91	57	Intra muscle inject	1.90	0.98
28	Check I/O	2.78	0.93	58	Intra venous inject	1.86	1.00
29	Check blood sugar	2.76	0.93	59	Opium therapy nursing care	1.84	0.98
30	Check mental status	2.72	0.95				

**Table 2.** Comparison between college students and public about recognition for delegation of nursing jobs

Items	Category	Mean	t	p
Endotracheal suction	Students	2.23	2.883	0.004**
	public	1.92		
Nutrition for dialysis patient	Students	2.14	4.033	0.000***
	public	1.68		
Catheterization	Students	2.11	2.604	0.010**
	public	1.81		
Control room temperature	Students	3.08	-2.123	0.034*
	public	3.27		
Restraint care	Students	2.55	2.141	0.033*
	public	2.31		
Oral medication	Students	2.43	3.520	0.000***
	public	2.05		
Eye drop medication	Students	2.35	2.620	0.009**
	public	2.07		
Suppository medication	Students	2.25	2.249	0.025*
	public	2.01		
Chemotherapy nursing care	Students	2.05	3.729	0.000***
	public	1.62		
Anticoagulant medication	Students	2.05	4.379	0.000***
	public	1.56		
Opium therapy nursing care	Students	1.96	4.720	0.000***
	public	1.48		
Intra-venous inject	Students	1.51	4.482	0.000***
	public	2.00		
Transfusion	Students	2.00	3.342	0.001**
	public	1.61		
Skin test	Students	2.09	2.246	0.025*
	public	1.82		
Explanation for test	Students	2.48	2.386	0.018*
	public	2.20		

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.00

practices such as catheterization, suppositories, irrigations, enemas and massages or douches should also be performed under the supervision of a doctor or nurse<sup>5,10,11</sup>. In Japan, nurse aides are referred to as associate nurses, and define them to provide nursing care or medical assistance for invalids, with a license by prefectures, and under the supervision of physicians, dentists or nurses<sup>8</sup>. In Korea, it is highly risky of medical malpractices and is a threat to nursing expertise for the nurse aides to perform high-risk medical care in clinics or hospitals under

the pretext of medical assistance without the supervision of nurses.

Sim et al. carried out job analysis for nurse aides in their study on the validity of national examination subjects<sup>8</sup>. Their findings showed high frequency and validity in the areas of assistance of outpatients, such as greeting patients, showing them to doctor’s office and labs, identifying patients and preparing medical records. Environmental management tasks such as cleaning and removing contaminated items or managing disinfection products were also frequent and highly valid activities<sup>8</sup>. However, health care activities such as changing diapers, perineal care, oral care and bathing, and basic care activities such as exercise and movement assistance showed low priority and validity, which is the different result from the findings of this study.

Students and general public showed differences in their perceptions about delegable nursing tasks in every administrative job such as ‘Opium therapy nursing care’, ‘Intra venous injection’ and ‘anticoagulant medication’. College students were more aware than the public of the possibility of delegation. The reason of this seems that college students have less recognition than the public of the professionalism of the nursing and do not distinguish or have little interest in the roles and positions between nurses and nurse aides, because the students visit mainly clinics and hospitals or have little chance to visit tertiary hospitals.

Low awareness of the college students of nursing expertise can have a negative influence on the image formation and expertise recognition of the nursing group in the future when they grow elderly. Therefore, it is necessary to look for ways to improve their perception of nursing expertise.

In response to the nursing shortage that occurred in the aftermath of the nurse dispatch to Germany in 1973, Korea has added the provision ‘medical institutions may grant nursing tasks to nurse aides in substitution of nurses’ to the medical law and never amended it. This decree is still effective, so most small hospitals have hired nurse aides instead of nurses to lower labor costs and have let them do several medical practices that are risky of delegation.

Currently in 2014, Korea has achieved remarkable economic and income level, accordingly shows increased needs and awareness of the professional health care for medical consumers. Nevertheless, the bill still allows non-medical nurse aides to perform unlicensed medical care.

Moreover, the current medical law defines nursing jobs as only 'assistant services of a doctor's medical care', without specific regulations how to provide professional nursing jobs. Also, there are no clear regulations for the works of nurse aides, so the boundaries of the nurse's roles, duties and responsibilities are ambiguous and the possibility of conflicts between the two occupations is high.

The hospitals should not use a shortcut to hire nurse aides with low wages in order to reduce the cost of medical care but have to hire nurse as defined in medical law, taking into account the impact of the quality and level of care on patient safety. Nurse aides are still taking simple training and education in 1 year coursework of institutes or high schools. This may drive nursing quality low. Demarre L. et al. showed that knowledge about pressure ulcer prevention of nurse aides was lower than that of nurses and this might made residents at risk in nursing home<sup>1</sup>. According to the cost analysis by New Brunswick, Canada, the hiring of nurse aides revealed no cost effectiveness considering the nursing level compared to wage<sup>5</sup>. It was reported that assigning only simple nursing jobs would be effective considering the years and level of education of nurse aides and that maintaining primary nursing care delivery system is better than team nursing in order to meet the needs of healthcare consumers.

This study has investigated and presented the degree of perception of healthcare consumers about the nursing jobs that can be delegated to the aides. Considering the findings, it would be urgent to enact statutes that can prevent confusion by defining nursing jobs by concrete actions that can be delegated to nurse aides and that can definitely clarify the cause and liability issues in the event of an accident.

## 4. Conclusion

Korea has developed a variety of nursing jobs in nursing group and has expanded the roles and responsibilities, but its current legislation has no specific regulations for nursing jobs so that boundaries of the role and scope of work between nursing groups are ambiguous. The awareness has been surveyed of nursing jobs that can be delegated to the nurse aides to find the perception of the general public about the professionalism of nursing. According to the result, the subjects were aware that nursing jobs such as assisting or helping moving or eating of patients could be

easily delegated to nurse aides. However, dangerous and important nursing jobs such as 'Opium therapy nursing care' or 'IV and IM medications' were not recognized to be delegable. However, nurse aides currently conduct IV and IM medications in local hospital or clinics, revealing that nurse aides are responsible for medical services that do not meet the result of the public awareness research and that unlicensed medical practices are still tolerated. Therefore, urgent enactment of legislation is required to clearly define nursing jobs that could be delegated to nurse aides and to establish a training system accordingly.

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