

POSTGRADUATE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF NURSING STAFF IN HOSPITALS FOR REHABILITATION

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Abstract

Training and professional development of nurses in specialized rehabilitation hospitals is essential for improving the quality of care. The purpose of this study was to determine the training needs of nurses involved in the rehabilitation process.

The results show that universities need to offer postgraduate training of nurses in highly specialized areas, such as rehabilitation. Quality of care is coherent with the continuing education and professional development of nursing staff, which is a significant part of a team of rehabilitation hospitals.

Key words: *postgraduate training, professional development, nursing*

Rehabilitation is a section of modern medical practice with increasing importance. Considering the reality of the ageing population and the increased burden of chronic diseases and disability, it is necessary to reconsider the specific health needs of the population risk groups and to develop rehabilitation strategies that guarantee the rights of chronically diseased patients and disabled persons and their integration in the social, political and economic life of society (Popova, S., 2001).

The changes in the healthcare system also impose a change in the attitude toward professional qualification, the development and creation of opportunities for the professional career of nurses. The new requirements need to be analysed and disseminated among the medical community. There is an imperative need to work with the current nurses, where apathy, lack of interest on the quality of the work performed, lack of interest in professional qualification and professional career are currently very common. The role of the nurse in rehabilitation hospitals has been recently underestimated and the nurse is not sufficiently utilised as a human resource. Nurses' professional development in these medical establishments should not necessarily be vertical, i.e. with an aspiration to take senior positions; horizontal development is also necessary, expressed in continuous expansion of the knowledge, skills and professional habits. The success of the nurses' professional development is related to their willingness for continuous learning in the established institutions and organisations, leading to enhanced professional qualification, necessary to improve the quality of service in rehabilitation hospitals.

The purpose of this study is to understand the opinion of nurses about the need to increase their professional qualification as a tool for improving the quality of service in rehabilitation hospitals.

Materials and methods: A survey has been carried out among nurses working in the following hospitals: "Specialised Rehabilitation Hospital - Kyustendil, Sandanski, Momin Prohod, Velingrad, Hisarya and St.Mina, town of Varshets affiliates. The survey covered 126 nurses.

Results and discussion: The professional development of nurses in rehabilitation hospitals depends on their successful adaptation to the work activities. The structure, the activities and relations within the team are among the main factors for successful professional adaptation.

The persons needing rehabilitation could suffer from different acute or chronic diseases, traumatic or non-traumatic diseases, acute and chronic disabilities, they might belong to different age, social, ethnic, educational, professional and other groups. All of them need different types of instruction and individual approach; however, in order to obtain high quality of the care given in rehabilitation hospitals, it is necessary for the nurses to be highly qualified and competent. However, not all of them feel they are sufficiently prepare to instruct patients – 61.9% of them reported they feel competent

only on certain matters, 20.6% were unable to instruct patients and only 17.5% of the nurses believed they are competent and capable of instructing the patients (fig.1).

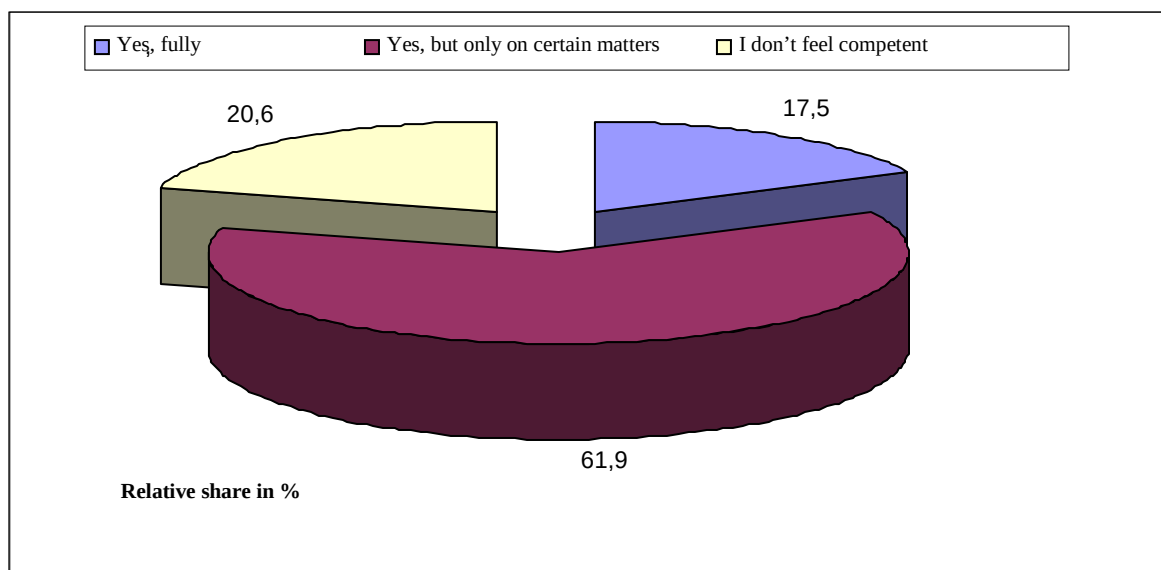


Fig.1 Competence of nurses to instruct patients

A number of studies indicate that nurses currently perform their activities primarily in line with the physician's requirements, the National Health Insurance Fund and other institutions controlling them not so much in line with the specific needs, expectations and needs of the patient and the family. All participants in the rehabilitation team should use all their scientific and professional knowledge, skills, experience and qualification to the patient's benefit with regard to prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of diseases. Caring for the patient, by creating a treating environment, improving, as far as possible, the physical and psycho-social status of the patient is the obligation of the nurse. The nurse should provide her services primarily in the patient's interest within her competence, obligations and in line with the scientific principles and the regulations for practising the occupation. In order to be competent to practise their occupation, nurses should always strive to increase their theoretical knowledge and practical skills by increasing their educational level.

It was found that there is statistical significance ($p < 0.01$) when comparing the competence of nurses on instructing patients with their educational level (fig.2).

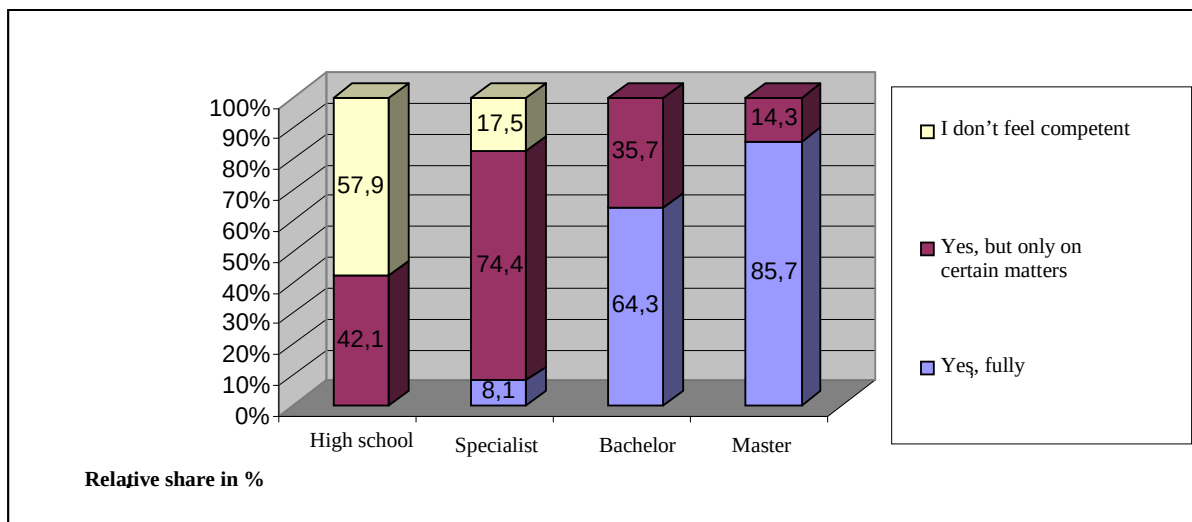


Fig.2 Relation between education and competence of nurses to instruct patients

The figure shows that nurses that do not feel competent to exercise their pedagogical functions in the rehabilitation team have a high school or college degree, which is related to lack of didactic studies in the academic curricula and programmes during their studies and lack of lifelong learning in these nurses. Nurses that feel fully prepared to instruct patients have a Bachelor's and Master's education and qualification degree (between 64.3% and 85.7%).

There is a significant share of nurses (81%), who believe they need further training to increase their qualification, where 64.3% of them believe this is absolutely necessary and 16.7% believe that further training is necessary only for certain nurses. The remaining 19% believe they do not need any further training (fig.3).

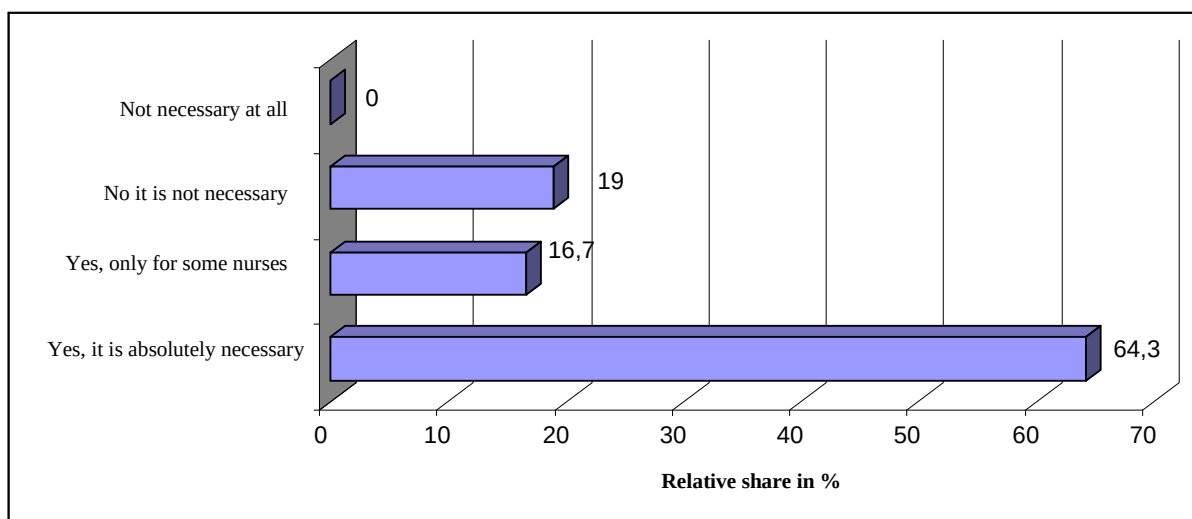


Fig.3 Need of further training for nurses

It is evident that in order to be competent at the work places, nurses feel the need of further training; however, only 42.1% of the surveyed reported that the hospital offers staff training and only 14.3% of them have responded "yes, training is offered", while according to 27.8% training is offered only

occasionally. Nurses reporting that their hospital does not offer staff training were 57.9%, 17.5% of which reported that no training is offered, 30.1% reported that no training is offered at all and 10.3% responded they are not aware of this (fig.4).

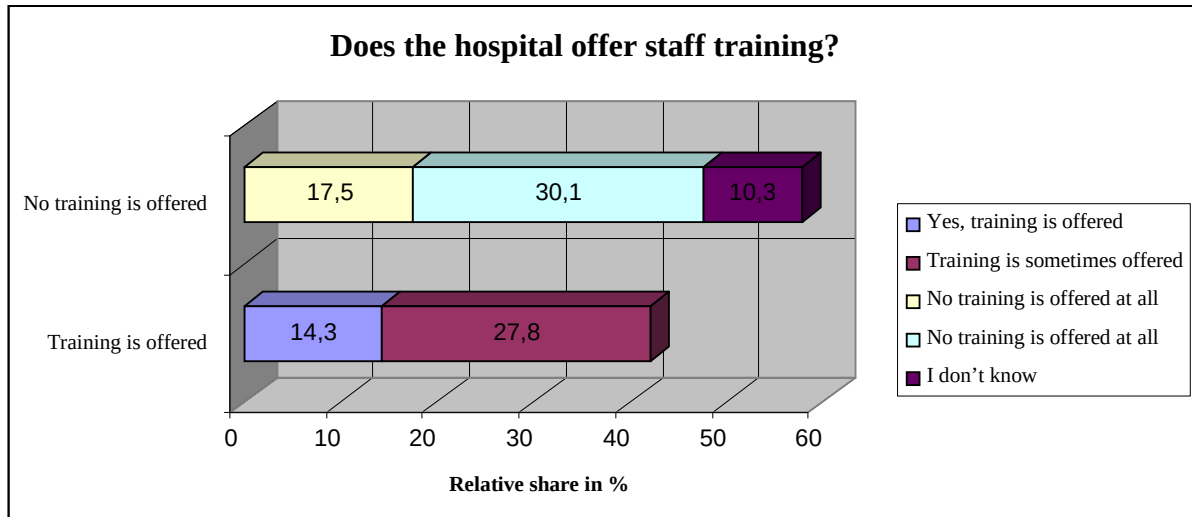


Fig.4 Staff training in rehabilitation hospitals

Regardless of the low relative share of nurses reporting that rehabilitation hospitals offer training for the nursing staff, we decided to learn what types of trainings are offered. The responses were diverse: qualification courses – 27.8%, training from colleagues – 15.9%, seminars – 5.6%, exchange of experience with other rehabilitation hospitals – 4%, work as part of Projects – 1.6%, whereas 2.4% reported other types of training. A large share of the nurses (42.8%) did not specify an answer, which reconfirms the fact that training for nurses is secondary in rehabilitation hospitals and leads to inefficiency at work (fig. 5).

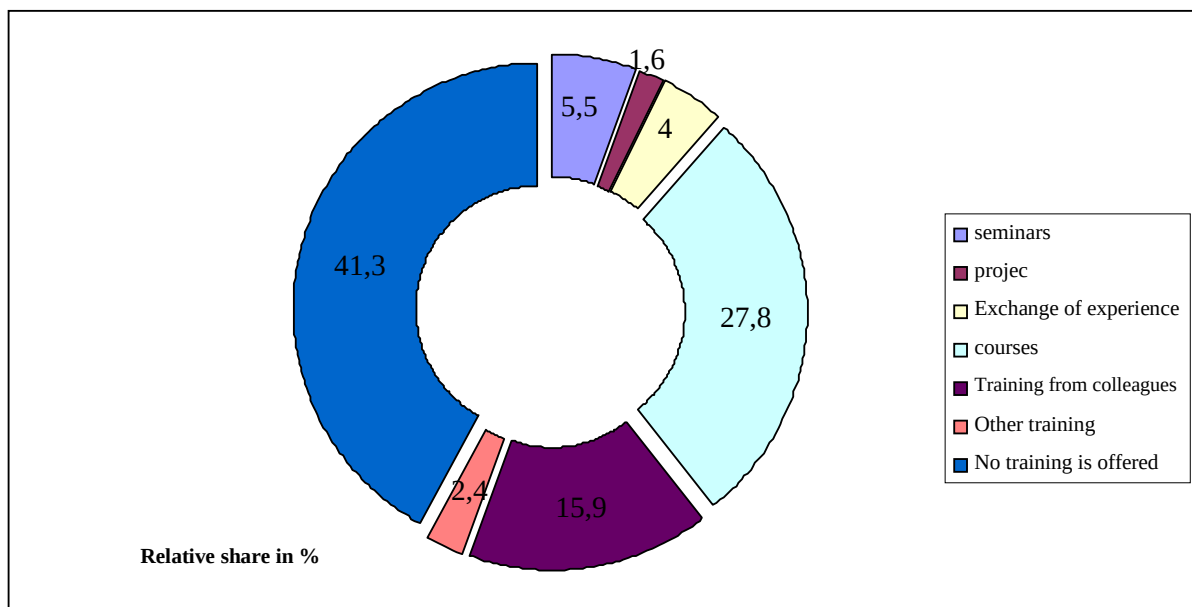


Fig.5 Main forms of training for increasing the qualification of nurses in rehabilitation hospitals

The types of training offered to the nursing staff in rehabilitation hospitals were compared to the education of the nurses and it was found that there is statistical dependence ($p < 0.01$) - fig.6.

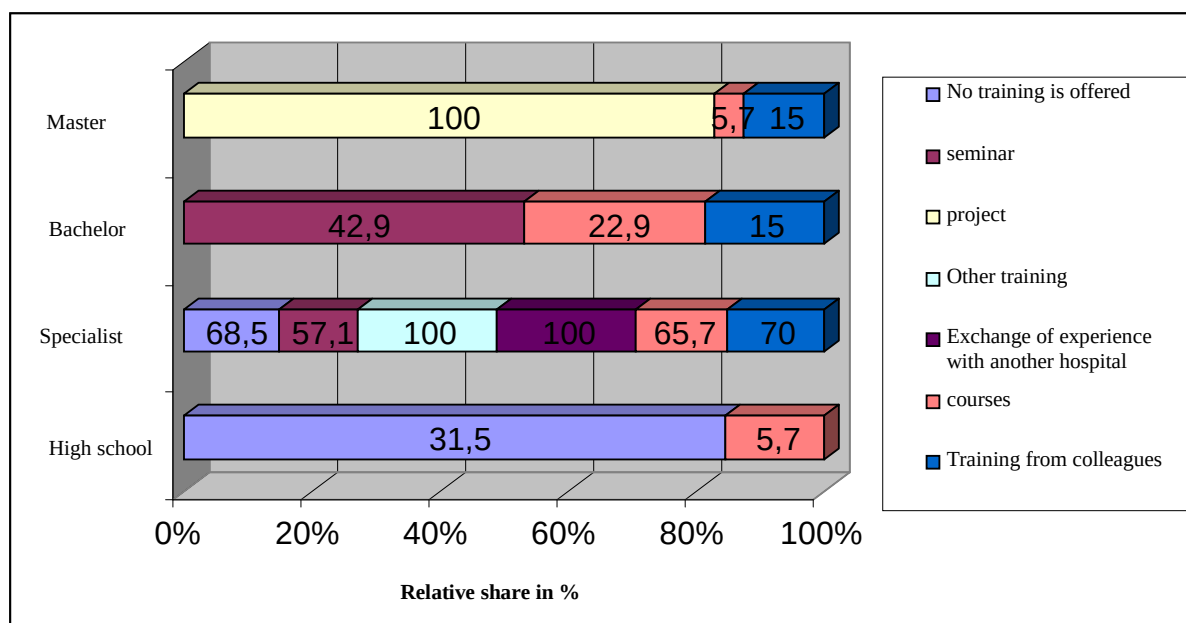


Fig.6 Relation between the training offered in rehabilitation hospitals and the education level of nurses

It is evident that nurses believing there was no specific for of training offered in rehabilitation hospitals had lower educational degree - vocational training and "specialist" degree. Attending different courses as a form of increasing the qualification were pointed by all nurses, regardless of their educational level. Seminars were reported by nurses with specialist and Bachelor's degree. Training from colleagues is the main form of training for all nurses, excluding the ones with vocational high school degree and participation in Projects was reported as a form of training only by nursters with a Master's degree. No statistically significant relation was found between the form of training offered in the medical establishment and the work position of the nurses.

In order to take their worthy place in the rehabilitation team, nurses need to be trained, informed and they need to improve their skills and update their knowledge by means of lifelong learning.

An important milestone of the change in the healthcare system is increasing the quality of care provided by creating opportunities for professional growth and career for healthcare professionals. In order to take their worthy place as a permanent member of the rehabilitation team in specialised hospitals, nurses need not only appropriate training that is adequate for the needs of society, but also change in the attitude toward their professional career. The main instrument for successful professional career is post-graduate study and specialisation.

A significant part of the nursing staff (84.1%) believe nurses need specialised training for working in rehabilitation hospitals, where 45.2% believe this is absolutely necessary, 27.8% believe it is necessary and 11.1% believe it is partially necessary. According to 15.9% of nurses no specialised preparation is necessary and no one has given the response "it is not necessary at all" - fig.7.

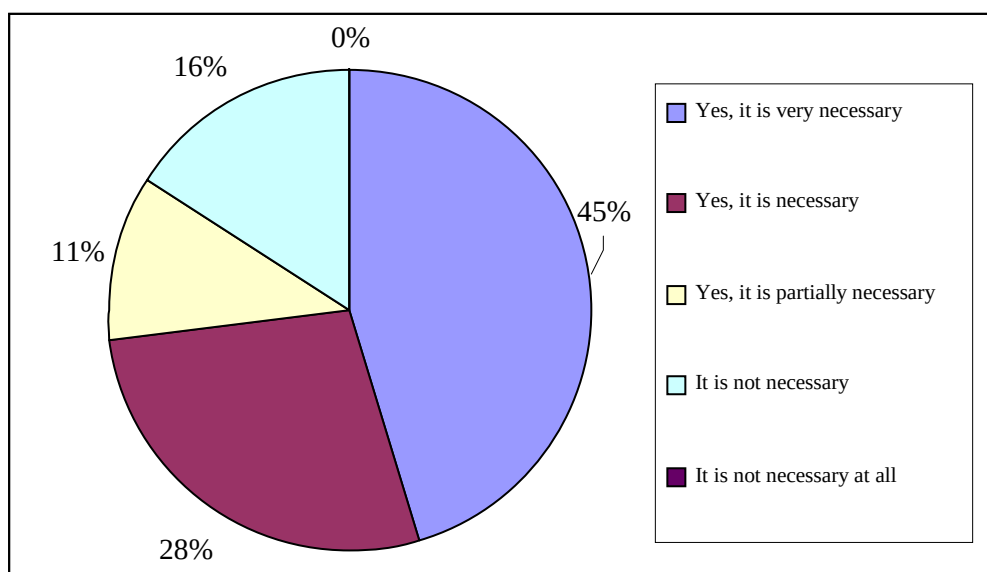


Fig.7 Need of specialised training for nurses to work in rehabilitation hospitals

Nurses believing special preparation for working in rehabilitation hospitals is necessary reported that it should be in the form of specialisation (39.8%); 29.3% believed organisation of courses outside work are necessary and 19% of them prefer the courses to be ten days long, 7.1% believe the courses should be five days long and 3.2% think that three-day courses are sufficient. 20.6% of nurses suggested that there should be training at the work place and 10.3% of them stated they needed training from a specialised institution - fig.8:

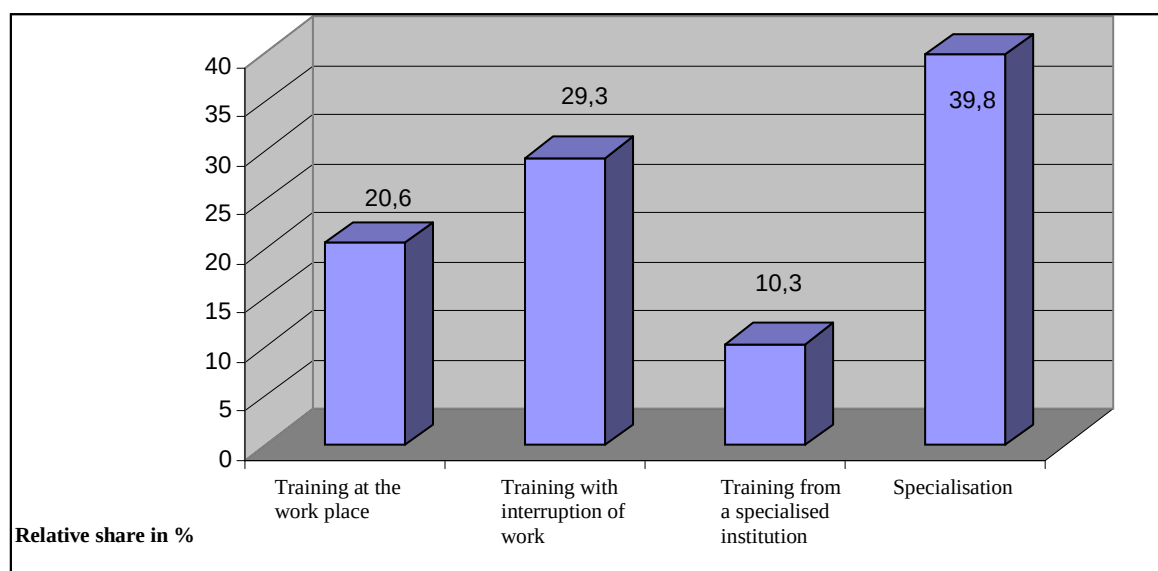


Fig.8 Opinions of nurses on the preferred type of training for working in rehabilitation hospitals

The type of training nurses believed was necessary to be competent to work in rehabilitation hospitals was compared to the factor signs of age, work experience in the rehabilitation hospital and educational level. No statistical dependencies were established ($p > 0.05$).

Nurses believing they need serious preparation to work in these medical establishments and suggesting that training should take place in the form of specialisation offered different names of the specialisation: nurse for rehabilitation activity – 54%, nurse for rehabilitation care – 26%, and according to 20% the specialisation should be called rehabilitation nurse.

Most of the nurses (70.6%) believed there was a perspective for their professional career in rehabilitation hospitals which proves the professional confidence and competence of nurses. A relatively large share (29.4%) considered they had no perspectives for professional career in the medical establishment they work in. The professional experience of nurses had certain impact on their views in this regard, as seen from table 1. Nurses with longer work experience rated higher the professional perspectives at the work place. A strong statistical dependence was established ($p < 0.01$).

Table 1. Perspectives for professional career of the nurse within the organisation based on the work experience factor

Work experience response	up to 10 years	between 11 and 20 years	over 20 years
Yes	25 %	28.6 %	74.8 %
No	75 %	71.4 %	25.2 %
Total	100 %	100 %	100 %

For high-quality and effective rehabilitation activity, qualified and specialised staff in the field of rehabilitation is necessary. This enhances the need to increase the professional qualification of the nurse as part of the rehabilitation team.

Conclusion

An important milestone of the change in the healthcare system is increasing the quality of care provided by creating opportunities for professional growth and career for healthcare professionals. In order to take their worthy place as a permanent member of the rehabilitation team in specialised hospitals, nurses need not only appropriate training that is adequate for the needs of society, but also change in the attitude toward their professional career. The main instrument for successful professional career is post-graduate study and specialisation of nurses.

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