CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter gives a summary of the findings made in the case study. Recommendations are made to improve on future studies. The conclusion follows the sequence of the research questions presented in chapter 1.

5.1 SUMMARY

The data obtained through the structured interview, revealed the following in terms of curriculum content:

i. Clarity of lesson objectives

   Five of the subjects said that the lesson objectives were either always or sometimes clear.

ii. Achievement of objectives

   Six of the subjects said that the objectives were met.

iii. Sequencing of contents

   Seven of them said contents were well sequenced and they were usually taught from general to specifics and from the known to the unknown.

iv. Link between theory and skills

   All the subjects agreed that a link exist between theory and skills.

v. Planning and organization of learning activities

Seven of the subjects agreed that the learning activities were well planned and organized.

vi. Ability to function following teaching

All the subjects said that there were able to function as a PCA following the training program.

In conclusion, the subjects perceived that the curriculum specifically the content of the existing program was relevant for their training. Although some of them said that sometimes they were given "a bit too much" knowledge that they were not expected to know. Whilst some of them enjoyed this extra knowledge, some felt stressed and confused at times.

The study revealed the following information in relation to the subjects' perception on the teaching methodologies used in their training.

Generally, the subjects (seven out of ten) were of the opinion that the facts in the lessons were well explained and presented, although this appears to be always with a particular tutor.

In regards to being given time to ask and answer questions, they felt that certain tutors have the tendency to "wander off" and talk "shop". As a result, time was not given to them (eight out of ten) for any queries. Some tutors also tend to ask and answer their own questions without waiting for answers from them. Subsequently, this made them feel "stupid" and that the tutors had no time with them. The tutors appear to be very impatient.

Likewise, they (seven out of ten) felt that opportunities were not provided for them to discuss and clarify new ideas. Some of the subjects said that they didn't feel like bringing forward any issues for discussion because it would be brushed aside.

On the other hand, they (eight out of ten) generally agreed that they were however, encouraged and provided with opportunities to apply knowledge gained to practical situations. They appreciated this, as most of them had no nursing experience especially in caring for the elderly. They were anxious about providing nursing care to these frail looking patients who do not seem to be very cooperative at times. Some appear to be exceptionally fussy and do not seem to understand what was being said. This could be contributed to the fact that the majority of these patients were Chinese while the respondents were mostly Indians. Moreover, some of the patients' proficiency in spoken Bahasa Malaysia was limited.

However, they felt that although they were provided with opportunities to apply theory to practice, they (nine out of ten) agreed that clinical support in terms of supervision was lacking. They expressed concern and dissatisfaction at the interview and hoped that this could be improved, as they wanted reassurance that they were providing proper care for these elderly patients. They needed regular feedback that they were OKAY!

The subjects (eight out of ten) felt that they were generally given more than 1 practice to develop their skills prior to clinical posting. However, they added that it would be better if they were given more opportunities to practice with their colleagues as this would help them to develop their confidence in their delivery of care.

The subjects (seven out of ten) were of the opinion that they were usually assigned to patient care appropriate to their level of learning. However, there were times when some tutors expected them to provide care that they have not been taught. This made them feel inadequate especially in front of the patient's relatives.

Although, the subjects (nine out of ten) were generally agreeable that the medium of instruction was appropriate, they felt that some Bahasa Malaysia should also be used in their teachings. Some said that they do not understand English very well. This becomes more of a problem as some tutors have a tendency to speak very fast and they could not catch up.

In conclusion, the subjects perceived the methodologies used in the program to be appropriate with the exception that they should be given time and opportunities for discussion and clarification of ideas. Clinical supervision need to be emphasized.

The following data are the subjects' perception on the methods of assessment used in their training and its appropriateness.

The guided structured interview revealed that the subjects (six out of ten) felt that feedback provided in relation to their performance and progress in the clinical area, was not consistently carried out. Moreover, feedback when given was always verbal. They felt that it would be more beneficial if the feedback provided was given in writing. They argued that this would give them a point of reference as to where their weakness and strengths were. Tutors should then identify ways for remedial training and thus help them to change their performance. They also felt that they should be rewarded by having their learning verified. They added that there should be some form

of certification of their level of competence.

The subjects (eight out of ten) said that the examination questions asked were related to what was taught in the classroom and thus was relevant. However, they suggested that multiple essay questions (MEQs) could also be used in addition to multiple choice answers (MCQs). They were of the opinion that this would assist them to think analytically and to reflect on their practice. Added to that, they felt MEQs would also help to improve their writing skills.

As part of their final assessment, the subjects were required to undergo a practical examination at the end of their training program. Each is given two nursing procedures, which she must complete within sixty minutes. Following which a feedback is immediately given as to their performance. Subjects (seven out of ten) revealed that the time allocated to complete these procedures were insufficient. They also felt that the procedures given differ in the amount of skills required of them. They stressed that some were given both easy procedures that can be completed within twenty minutes while others had "bigger" ones that required more time, not only to carry out but also to prepare for. They suggested that perhaps everyone should be given a simple and more complex procedure and time taken to carry out these procedures must also be taken into consideration. There should also be a structured format on assessment for the practical examination so as to maintain consistency and validity of evaluation. They felt that different examiners assess them differently!

In regards to continuous assessments, they (eight out of ten) were agreeable that it helps to improve and motivate them to learn. They felt that regular feedback

helps them to develop confidence, increases their strengths and to work on their weaknesses.

All the subjects unanimously agreed that being presented with a certificate at the end of their training certainly held meaning for them. They were also very positive that although this training was only conducted in-house, the certificate would prove beneficial when applying for another new job.

Finally, even though all the subjects agreed that the assessment methods used to evaluate their progress during their training were generally appropriate, however, they felt that it was too frequent at times. This was in contrast to what they mentioned earlier in relation to their thoughts on continuous assessments.

In conclusion, the subjects perceived the assessment methods used in the program to be relevant and appropriate. However, feedback and timing allocated for practical examination needed to be looked into.

5.2 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The limitations of this case study are acknowledged. Firstly, the sample population was very small and limited to a homogeneous group of subjects. The case study was based on the perception of only 1 category of staff. To be more realistic, the researcher should also obtain an opinion poll from other categories in relation to the issues studied. For instance, she could seek the views of the trained staff, the nurse

manager, and the tutors/ clinical instructors. The sample population should also be larger so that generalizations of the findings can be made.

Secondly, this particular training program is designed specifically for the personal care assistants of the private hospital concerned. Thus, the findings may entirely differ if conducted in a different set –up such as a general acute hospital, a nursing home or other facilities offering geriatric care.

Thirdly, the issues studied are very superficial. Hence, it is suggested that future studies should be more in- depth and should concentrate on specific aspects of issues under study. For example, when studying the issue of teaching methodologies, research can be carried out on a particular type of teaching method such as role- play or case conferencing.

Finally, due to time constrain the researcher was unable to determine whether extraneous variables such as a subject's age, sex, previous nursing experiences or exposure to the elderly correlate with attitudes toward the aged and ultimately the care provided for them.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The findings obtained from the case study was that the respondents generally felt that instructional content was relevant for what was expected of them as a personal care assistant. However, the objectives of the lessons should be better

defined and tutors must bear in mind the level of qualifications of her students. They should not be "carried away" and "give" too much as it will only serve to confuse and stress them.

This is consistent with what Roscoe (1992) said in relation to content. He pointed out that, when deciding the content of a program, one must ensure that the content cover the objectives link to the entry behavior of the students and should help transfer learning to the job.

It was found that the various teaching methodologies employed in the training of the personal care assistants were considered to be appropriate. The limitations however, lie entirely in the individual tutors concerned. According to Roscoe (1992), different training methods require resources in terms of trainers, accommodation, technical support, material and other factors, which must be identified and considered.

One must question what skills and expertise the trainers possess in the subject area of the learning objective, the role he is expected to play and the skills he has in implementing the learning event and the performance assessment measures. He further added that, if the trainer skills were not available then revisions of the training design in terms of learning objectives, entry behavior, the learning event and performance assessment would have to be considered.

As nursing is basically "hands on", the importance of clinical supervision and carefully planned and selected activities to meet the needs of the students on different levels of accomplishment cannot be overemphasized. This is supported by Guinee (1966) that, activities when carefully planned and selected will help to ensure that the

student will not only master the subject content but will also acquire skill in its application from the nursing situation.

In nursing, evaluation of the student's progress is especially important and hence, should be the concern of all involved in the training program. According to Guinee (1966), evaluation should be a mutual responsibility of the teacher and the student.

Evaluations can be very subjective. Thus, it can be influenced by individual tutor's differences in their knowledge, skills, and other characteristics. Although, the effects of individual differences in evaluation cannot be eliminated completely, the degree of inconsistencies can be reduced. This can be accomplished through the use of valid and reliable procedures for evaluation and by the preparation of the tutor in their use.

According to Roscoe (1992), the purpose(s) of performance assessment should be clearly thought through. Unless one is clear in regards to this, sound decisions on selecting appropriate measures cannot be taken. In addition, Roscoe is of the opinion that in selecting performance assessment measures, attention must also be paid to whether a measure is valid and reliable for a particular learning objective.

In the study, it was found that although the respondents were generally agreeable with the assessment methods used they reported that there were inconsistencies in their assessments and the frequencies in which there were conducted were questionable. They suggested that tutors should use a structured format of assessing their progress and performance.

In conclusion, it is hoped that the management of Hospital G would consider re-looking into the training program of the personal care assistants and adapt them to the needs of the patients that they are caring for. Tutors too should consider having the students evaluate them for competencies and greater teaching effectiveness.