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RESPONSE TO "A PRELIMINARY STUDY DESIGNED TO EXPLORE THE DIFFERENCE IN EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL TEACHINGS IN SELF-MEDICATION"

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It is encouraging to see a study conducted as part of student clinical experience. The area of medication administration is one with which nursing must be concerned. This is an interesting study, but with the sample size it is hard to determine the value and impossible to draw conclusions on the effects of individual and group teaching. The author is realistic in delineating the limitations of this study. Replication of the study would be interesting but one would need clarification on several points before this would be possible.

The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of group teaching in terms of gaining knowledge of medication in reducing drug errors. Random selection of patients was carried out without any attempt to control the variables. As the literature indicates that certain factors, such as severity of illness, the complexity of the medical regimen and psychological status affect medication errors it would strengthen future studies if some attempt were made to match the experimental and control groups on these variables.

In describing the method, the author indicates that different students were involved in teaching. To me this is not as critical as the consistency of the content of the teaching programs. One concern in my mind was whether the patients receiving individual teaching on antibiotics received the same information as those in the group situation.

Standard content would be a critical factor in comparing teaching effectiveness between the experimental and control group; particularly when one examines the patients' knowledge of drug action and side effects.

Another concern, in the area of data analysis, is the inclusion of data on drugs other than antibiotics. In the analysis of data in the area of methods of administration the author cites three problems, all of which were related to drugs other than antibiotics. We do not know whether these are significant in terms of group versus individual teaching, as we do not know whether any teaching had been given to patients other than that related specifically to the use of antibiotics.

For these reasons one cannot say that the hypothesis that group methods were more effective than individual teaching was verified on the basis of the evidence presented. It was demonstrated however, that the patients who received group teaching appeared to have a sound knowledge of antibiotics, their action, side effects and modes of administration.

While commending the intent of the study a tightening up of the methodology and analysis would enhance the value if replication was considered.

It must be questioned how widely group techniques can be utilized. From an economical point of view group teaching is a plus. One can see it utilized in relation to insulin, to cardio-vascular drugs, but in many instances where patients are on multiple medications one wonders how learning situations could be structured to meet group needs.

Individual problems such as the failure to take medication on the part of one patient due to his difficulty in swallowing his pills, suggest another area for nursing study. Problems of this nature would be more likely to respond to an individual rather than a group teaching approach, as assessment of individual needs would be the basis on which such education would need to be based.