

Perceptions of nurse students and community nurses on ageism

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Background

Ageism or age discrimination and negative attitudes towards older people are prevalent in healthcare. The population of older people is increasing worldwide along with challenges for all those who are involved in the provision of their health care.

Aim of the study

To investigate published studies on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of nurses and student nurses regarding age discrimination and attitudes towards older people/patients.

Methods

A systematic review of the literature in the electronic database "PubMed", "Scopus", "Cochrane" was carried out on November 2021 with keywords: "community nurses", "views", "ageism", "nurse students", "attitudes", "older people", in all possible combinations using the link "and". Admission criteria included the publication in Greek and English of research studies published in peer-reviewed journals and access to the full text of the article. All studies referring to students and nurses' views on age discrimination towards older people/patients were included in the systematic review.

Results

46 studies were included of which 4 refer to community nurses and 42 to undergraduate students. Research findings demonstrate that the factors affecting attitudes towards older people include age, gender, education, values, exposure to older people, area of practice, knowledge and experience, and professional socialization. Education at university level appears to promote positive attitudes towards older people.

Conclusions and implications

Research has focused mostly on student nurses, and findings show that ageism is prevalent, a problem that probably affect their future practice. Data on community nurses' ageist attitudes are limited and there is a need for further investigation.