



**Internship Training And Job Prospects Of Graduate Nurses In University College  
Hospital, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

This study identified the specific professional skills acquired by the graduate nurses during their internship period. Also, it identified factors militating against internship training in the nursing profession. These were done with a view to providing empirical information for improving professional nursing practice and job prospects. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Qualitative approach was used. The population for the study comprised the 16 current intern nurses (2019/2020 set or session), 19 formal intern nurses (who have just completed their internship training) and 1,005 preceptors from the available record in UCH (These was approximately 1,005 preceptors in UCH as at April 3, 2019). The total population was 1,040. The

sample size was 41 respondents which comprised the sixteen (16) intern nurses (93.5%). Using total enumeration sampling technique, 15 formal intern nurses (100%) was selected using snowballing sampling technique, and 10 preceptors selected using convenient sampling technique, being the preceptors on duty at the time of administration of research instruments. The instruments used for data collection were direct observation termed Observation Check-list on Nursing Internship Training (OCNIT) and open ended interview guide titled Nursing Internship Training Interview (NITI) for intern nurses and Preceptors on Nursing Internship Training Interview (PNITI). The data were analyzed using content analysis. The results showed that the intern nurses received training in all the necessary specific skills for nursing profession such as punctuality, drug medication, fluid fixing, managing complications well, confidence in practice, updating self, setting priority in attending to patients, wound dressing, patient-nurse relationship, laying beds and management of labour cases. The study showed that the factors working against internship training included lack of awareness on nursing internship, insufficient medical equipment, inadequate welfare, lack of trust; seeing intern nurses as student nurses who just came for posting and not professionals. The study concluded that intern nurses received adequate training in all the skills necessary for the nursing profession in the University College Hospital, Ibadan.

**Keywords:**

Internship Training, Job Prospects

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## Introduction

The importance of internship training for graduate nurses in Nigeria is very germane because it helps to prepare them for efficient nursing practice at the clinical setting. Nursing is one of the noble professions in Nigeria, with a lot of enviable prospects for nurses in clinical practice, education, research, entrepreneurship, and administration. Emergency-live.com (2021) revealed that after graduation from university or school of nursing, nurses are expected to undergo a compulsory one-year internship programme designed to ground them in clinical experience and help them perfect their clinical skills, after which they would then obtain their license to practice. It was also revealed that nurses in Nigeria are licensed by Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN) to practice professionally after undergoing rigorous and thorough educational and clinical training and have passed required professional examinations (Emergency-live.com).

Internships which originated in the U.S. in early 1900s are work-based educational experiences that relate to specific jobs, positions, occupations or professions (The Department of Public Service Administration, 2006). Internship gives graduates workplace experience and an opportunity to practice the work skills that they have studied and will practice in future. This is in line with the submission of Ghazy, Khereba, and El Diasty (2021) that internship provides students many opportunities to apply what they have learnt in classrooms into real-world situations. Ghazy et al. (2021) emphasized that internship plays a critical role in cultivating nursing students' professional success. According to Okoye (2018), internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting which gives graduates the opportunity to gain valuable experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths. Ibrahim and Sleem (2021) defined internship as an action where nursing intern's students have practical training, clinical skills and professional experience.

Nursing training is no doubt a combination of theoretical and practical learning experiences that permit nursing students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for providing nursing care. Nursing as a profession began with practical nursing some decades ago on basic nursing education combined with practical learning in the clinical wards. The training started as an informal, apprenticeship training and emphasized on-the-job manipulative skill acquisition, strict obedience to institutional rules and regulations of practice and ethical conduct but with minimal opportunity for creativity, accountability, independent clinical decision making or professional development (Ojo, 2010). This implies that the nursing training places emphasis on practical learning experiences which is very crucial to their professionalism.

The university nursing programmes prepare nurses at different levels and competencies. At the completion of first degree, individual nurse may proceed for a Master's programme to obtain M.Sc. (Nursing) and later a Ph.D. (Nursing). Internship for graduates of the Bachelor of Nursing Science Degree Programme was introduced by the Government of Nigeria in September, 2016 with a view to enhancing improvement of nursing practice in Nigeria. The Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria initiated and implemented a number of reforms in nursing education including the commencement of the Bachelor of Nursing Science Degree Programme in many universities



in Nigeria. However, the graduates of the programme were not exposed to any form of internship like other health professions in Nigeria (NMCN, 2016). Consequently, new graduate nurses over the years have been employed in health institutions inadequately and unpractically prepared for efficient nursing practice.

It is well noted that internships help new graduates to practice the skills they have theoretically learnt in school which enable them to build solid professional career (Okoye, 2018). It is in consideration of the huge benefits of nursing internship that a formal approval was given by the Government of Nigeria for twelve months paid public service internship programme for new graduate nurses in September, 2016 (NMCN, 2016). The commencement of this internship took effect in January, 2017 (Yusuf, 2017). Hence, the approval of professional internship in university nursing education in Nigeria brings reformation to experimental-based nursing practices and standards.

Today, nursing profession still plays a vital and relevant role in the health care system. It can best serve the biological, psychological, spiritual, and sociological needs of individual client via the competent utilization of the nursing knowledge acquired. Since nursing education is a performance-based profession, internship training is important in the acquisition of professional abilities by training the student nurses to enter the nursing profession and become a registered nurse. Thus, the adequate and proper education and training of nurses is a vital aspect of health care in today's society. The challenges in today's health care are huge and overwhelming; therefore, the quality of nursing education needs to be increased and enhanced to meet these challenges as a necessary part of reforming our health care system. That is, the primary focus of nurses in the hospitals today should be on patients' adequate care and must be valued rather than aiming at income only in the health care system.

The current study seeks to emphasize the need for adequate experience for quality nursing care. Hess (1996) argued that just as the number of nurses must be adequate to meet demand, the profession's commitment to ensure the competence (quality) of its members also must be demonstrated. This could be realized through effective internship training that will provide practical experience to nursing graduates for quality health care delivery. Internship generally offers graduates from any field of study a period of practical experience in the industry relating to their fields. Specifically, this experience allows graduate nurses to learn how their theoretical knowledge will be applied in the "real world" of work. Internship programme for graduate nurses exposes them to practical skills in health care profession. The graduate nurses are made to engage in internship training after they have graduated and before they go for the mandatory one year National Youth Service Corps in Nigeria.

Practical clinical skills lie at the heart of nurses' professional practice; therefore, the mastery of fundamental clinical skills is an important component of courses leading to registration (Sundstrom, 2000). Practical experiences are the use of evidence-based procedures which aimed at promoting patients' good health by the use of applicable procedures. It is made up of various methods and procedures performed at skills health care industry, where skills are improved with training. Standing (2007), stated that critical thinking is important in performing most of the skills



when attending to patients. However, the effectiveness of nursing skill is attained by fostering a good foundation throughout university education for student nurses. Though, many works have been conducted on nursing profession, but no known study in the field of adult education and learning has been conducted and documented in literature on how successful or otherwise the internship programme has been implemented for graduate nurses with the attendant job prospects. Then, the skills needed for the purpose of increasing patients' safety and to promote proper professional internship training for graduate nurses required in the actual clinical setting need to be investigated. Hence, this study becomes very germane in filling this gap in knowledge.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the internship training for graduate nurses in University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan, Nigeria and their job prospects. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. identify the specific professional skills acquired by the graduate nurses during the internship period; and,
2. identify factors militating against internship training in the nursing profession.
- 3.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the stated objectives, the study shall answer the following questions:

1. What are the specific professional skills necessary for job prospects acquired during internship period by interns at the hospital?
2. What are the factors militating against internship training in the nursing profession?

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Qualitative approach was employed on internship training for graduate nurses at University College Hospital, Ibadan. This design enabled the researchers to interact with and understand different conditions and status of the subjects of the research in different contexts and situations. The design also assisted the researchers to use observation check-list and open ended interview guide to obtain data to answer the research questions in this study. The study population comprised all the 16 intern nurses (2019/2020), 19 former intern nurses (2018/2019) and 1,005 preceptors from the available record in UCH (There was approximately 1,005 preceptors in UCH as at April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019). The total population is 1,040. The UCH was purposively selected for this study because it was the only school in Nigeria that had implemented internship programme for nurses as at 2019/2020. The sample for the study was 41 participants. It comprised the entire sixteen (16) intern nurses using total enumeration sampling technique, 15 former intern nurses were selected using snowballing sampling technique, and 10 preceptors selected using convenient sampling technique, being the preceptors on duty as at the time the research was being conducted.

The following instruments were used to collect data for this study.

1. Observation check-list on Nursing Internship Training (OCNIT);



2. Nursing Internship Training In-depth Interview Guide (NITIIG).
3. Preceptor on Nursing Internship Training In-depth Interview Guide (PNITIIG).

Direct observation was employed to evaluate the aspect of observation checklist and open-ended responses from respondents were used through interview guide which was audio recorded and transcribed by the researchers. The researchers held a small feedback session with some interns and preceptors immediately after the interview and notes were taken. This was to ensure clarification of the participants' expressions or confusion observed while collecting the data as well as their reaction to the interview. Afterwards, the audio interview was transcribed into text format for easy data analysis. Subsequently, all statements relevant to the research questions in the transcript were identified, and each was assigned a code for easy grouping and further reduction of the data.

Data collected through the observation checklist and interview guide questions were analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis can be both quantitative (i.e, counting and measuring) and qualitative (i.e, interpreting and understanding). This study engaged the qualitative type as interviews were recorded, interpreted and then analyzed. Content analysis is a research method used to identify patterns in recorded communication. In this work, the researchers collected data systematically from a set of visuals in form of speeches and interviews conducted for the intern nurses and the preceptors which were recorded, transcribed, interpreted and then analyzed for balanced and thorough results.

## Results

### Research Question One

**What are the specific professional skills necessary for job prospects acquired during internship period by interns at the hospital?**

The indicators were the different responses from the observation. The skills were rated positive (excellent, very good and fair) and negative (poor). The values in percentage were the scoring scales of the responses. All the responses equal to 16 and none of the respondents scored negative (poor). The observation of the specific professional skills acquired during internship period was carried out. It was observed that all the perceived skills were supported to be worthwhile by all the respondents for the study. The findings showed that the intern nurses' scores were 'fair' (2), 'good' (3), 'very good' (4) and 'excellent' (5), respectively. None was scored 'poor' (1). It was observed that all the skills in which the intern nurses were being trained for nursing profession were hundred percent (100%) supported.

The specific professional skills acquired mentioned during the interview included: giving respect to the senior nurses; nursing administration and management and liberty to run shift duties as professionals; not falsifying documents; giving respect to patients' views. Others were punctuality, confidentiality and good documentation of drug administration on patients. In categorical terms, the following professional skills were expected to be acquired during the internship. These are punctuality, drug administration, fluid fixing, managing complications well,



confidence in practice, updating self, setting priority in attending to patients, wound dressing, patient-nurse relationship, laying beds and management of labour cases. On the issue of relevance of the professional skills as a nurse, the claim was that the skills would help to manage a ward confidentially and assist in preparing interns toward the professional nursing practice.

Comments were obtained from former intern nurses on specific professional skills acquired. The following were mentioned: respect for the senior ones or those in high hierarchy, nursing administration and management and liberty to run shift duties as professionals; never falsify document, being patients' advocate, respect patients' views, punctuality, confidentiality and good documentation of drug administration to patients. In terms of professional skills already acquired, the following were highlighted: punctuality, drug administration, fluid fixing, managing complications well, confidence in practice, updating self, setting priority in attending to patients, wound dressing, patient-nurse relationship, laying beds, management of labour cases, carrying out procedures such as immunization. Other skills are computerization, independent and diagnosis skills.

From the interview responses from preceptors of intern nurses on specific professional skills acquired, the professional skills mentioned included: taking history of the patient, admitting a patient, handling psychological issues of patients because of their individuality, making of beds for different ill persons. Bed making for cardiac and opedic patients in different forms; proper wound dressing, giving self-medication, evaluating general health condition of a patient to prognosis or diagnose a patient.

### **Research Question Two**

#### **What are the factors militating against internship training in nursing profession?**

From the interview responses from current intern nurses on factors militating against training during internship, approximately thirteen (13) of the interns reported that there was poor remuneration i.e. poor payment and inequality in paying intern nurses e.g. ranging from ₦90, 000.00 to ₦120, 000. 00. All the current interns pointed out the lack of awareness of nursing internship; insufficient medical equipment; lack of trust (seeing the intern nurses as student nurses who just come for posting experience) and thereby not giving them challenging responsibilities.

The interview responses from former intern nurses on factors militating against training during internship included: poor remuneration; lack of awareness on nursing internship, insufficient medical equipment, inadequate welfare, lack of entrust and revised log book to be applicable to their practice. On the issue of challenges, the following were mentioned: sentiment or authoritarian attitude on the part of the superior nurses and seeing interns as learners and not professionals; delayed certification of nurses on internship. The sources of these problems could be personal, institutional (hospital) or governmental (policy).

Interview responses from preceptors of intern nurses on factors militating against training during internship revealed the following factors: inadequacy of intern nurses; stress in bridging the gap between theory and practice, poor remuneration and lack of awareness of the program. The preceptors observed that some intern nurses resist correction during the training by coming



late to training while some are ready to learn and are correctable. Others included lateness to work; effort to make them independent as in-coming professional nurses is an issue because some intern nurses show no interest in learning as noticed in their performance at work.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Findings from this study revealed that many professional skills were acquired by intern nurses during the internship training which helped them to be confident and competent as professionals in nursing. This is in tandem with the view of Ghazy et al (2021) that an internship program aims at providing student-nurses with those nursing information, skills and experience that are necessary to qualify them as highly competent nursing specialists. In the same vein, Casey (2004) believed that nursing internships are geared towards providing graduate nurses with a comprehensive orientation to a specialty unit, develop therapeutic communication skills, improve time management abilities, learn the principles of proper delegation, practice critical thinking skills in a non-threatening environment, and develop clinical nursing skills specific to the specialty.

Professional nursing skills competence is the use of practical procedures that is aimed at promoting patients health care. In nursing ethics, Numminen (2010) explained that students are required to master basic procedures before practicing on patients at the clinical setting. The respondents attested to the fact that the professional skills would help to manage a ward confidentially and assist in preparing interns toward the professional nursing practice, diagnosing any patient and evaluating health condition of any clients. Okoye (2018) reiterated that internships help new graduates to practice the skills they have theoretically learnt in school which enable them to build solid professional career. Therefore, a total orientation is needed for all interns during internship to become professional nurses being the purpose of internship training.

Although, numbers of perceived factors were found working against internship training such as limitations of intern nurses at Federal hospitals in term of engagement, poor remuneration, lack of awareness on nursing internship, insufficient medical equipment, inadequate welfare, lack of trust; seeing intern nurses as student nurses who just come for posting and not professionals. It could therefore be concluded that the cause of these problems could be personal, institutional (hospital) or governmental factor. Deasy (2011) stated that graduate nurses' inadequate preparation for entering the clinical environment creates problem for them and nursing preceptors. Though, intern nurses learn the fundamentals of nursing in classrooms and practice rooms, nursing graduates do not have sufficient time to practice and repeat professional nursing skills to completely enter the clinic for practice. Thus, internship becomes imperative just as Okoye (2018) emphasized that nursing internships train and prepare graduate nurses to provide competent, safe, and effective nursing care and also teach graduates how to apply therapeutic communication, critical thinking, professionalism, and legal and ethical skills to the clinical area.

Killam and Heerschap (2013) found out that the graduate nurses insufficient practice and lack of skill before entering the clinical environment created problems for them with respect to learning in the clinic. The preceptors observed that some intern nurses resist correction during the training by coming late to training while some are ready to learn and are correctable. Then, effort to make



them independent as in-coming professional nurses is an issue because some intern nurses show no interest in new learning environment as noticed in their performance at work. Joolae (2015) laments that graduates' lack of skill in confronting the clinical environment and dealing with actual patients is evident. The lack of knowledge and skill and inadequate preparation for entering the clinical environment disturb their learning processes and make them anxious and make mistakes in practice. Nursing graduates' lack of practical skills is considered as a challenge in entering the clinical setting. Therefore, nursing internship training should be promoted and implemented in all teaching hospitals since it enhances clinical skills of graduate nurses in practice. This is in support of Adewole; Salawu and Bello (2020) that health professionals are the most important factor in strengthening the health system, hence the need for them to go through adequate training to obtain the competencies and skills required to deliver optimum care and save lives.

### **Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study revealed that the professional skills acquired by intern nurses were punctuality, accurate drug prescription, fluid fixing, managing complications well, confidence in practice, setting priority in attending to patients, wound dressing, friendly patient-nurse relationship, laying beds, management of labour cases, computerization, prognosis and diagnosis skills and carrying out procedures such as immunization. Furthermore, the respondents attested to the fact that the professional skills would help to manage a ward confidentially and assist in preparing interns toward the nursing practice, diagnosing any patient and evaluating health condition of any clients. Hence, the statistics of specific professional skills during internship period was also observed through the observational checklist. The findings showed that the intern nurses' scored were 'fair' (2), 'good' (3), 'very good' (4) and 'excellent' (5), respectively. None was scored 'poor' (1). It could be observed that all the skills were hundred percent (100%) supported that intern nurses were being trained with skills necessary for nursing profession.

The second research question probed factors working against successful internship training in nursing profession. The analysis showed insufficiency of time for practical experience of graduate nurses before exposing them to internship training. Though, graduate nurses learn the fundamentals of nursing in classrooms and practical rooms, nursing graduates do not have sufficient time to practice nursing at school. This is because the graduate nurses were more exposed to theoretical knowledge while in school than practical experience, thus, the preceptors make more effort to help graduate nurses become efficient in nursing practice. The result of this research question got similar response of all the preceptors which implies dissatisfaction in the performance of the intern nurses during the internship training.

### **Conclusions**

The intern nurses were exposed to very relevant professional skills required for their successful career practice during the one year internship at the UCH, Ibadan. There was stress in bridging the gaps between theory and practice by the intern nurses. Insufficient time, among others, is a major factor working against efficient training of intern nurses during their internship.



### Recommendations

From the results of this study, the researcher recommends the below for improvement or further studies on internship training for graduate nurses in Nigeria thus:

1. Provision of sufficient time, facility and equipment to facilitate in-take of more prospective graduate nurses for internship training at teaching hospitals should be given adequate attention it deserves.
2. Nursing syllabus should look into the posting exercise during graduate nurses' university programme so as to prepare them for efficient clinical nursing before going out for practical/work experience.

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