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AUTHOR Grippando, Gloria M.
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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between clinical laboratory experiences in 19 local cooperating agencies and the philosophy of the College of Lake County Licensed Practical Nursing Program. The subjects were 27 female LPN students, ages 18-44, who completed an evaluative form consisting of 10 items. The items were evaluated on a 1 to 5 rating scale, indicating a poor to superior rating. The overall results showed that seven agencies have a mean of less than 3.0 average. Recommendations are made in light of the findings. (An appendix presents the rating form.) (DB)

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L.P.N. STUDENTS EVALUATE COOPERATING AGENCY EXPERIENCES

by

Gloria M. Grippando, RN, MS
College of Lake County
Grayslake, IL 60030

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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INTRODUCTION

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Context of the Problem

In the fall of 1969, the College of Lake County opened its doors for the first time to students. The Licensed Practical Nursing Program was among the first career programs. Clinical laboratory experiences were selected to correlate with theory and a contractual agreement between the college and each cooperating agency was written by the Coordinator and the Assistant Dean of Career Programs. (See Appendix I) The present community facilities to which the students are assigned have been utilized for three to five years. During this time, the Coordinator and the two practical nursing instructors have experienced situations which appear to be negative learning. In conferencing students, complaints about various institutions, departments and personnel have been brought to light. Since theory without practice would be educationally unsound for a nursing student, it is essential that the best possible community resources be utilized to provide the experiences needed. Therefore, this practicum affords the opportunity for a comprehensive examination of these experiences as viewed by the students who are the recipients of this educational plan.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between clinical laboratory experiences in local cooperating agencies and the philosophy of the College of Lake County L.P.N. Program. (See Appendix II)

Review of the Literature

If nursing competency is expected of the student, appropriate clinical laboratory experiences must be provided to correlate with the theory learned in the classroom. Nursing students today are concerned about a broader scope than the patient and his hospital environment. This generation does not desire to remain in the traditional classroom setting with its stereotyped learning activities. The young nursing aspirant in this era is inspired with the concept of brotherly love and peace and wishes to be involved with the social problems of fellow men. More importantly, they want to create change so that all men might enjoy a happier, healthier, better adjusted life. Nursing educators must take the student into the community for a broader learning atmosphere. Students should find satisfaction in their assigned nursing experiences. (Rice, 1973)

A descriptive model for nursing education identifies the major areas of concern as: people, knowledge, and environment. In the category of people are included: students, teachers, family, and community. The teacher's knowledge will depend largely upon educational background and individual philosophy of education and life. Student knowledge will be designated as facilities and equipment. (Quiring, 1973) Facilities include all of the places in which the student learns; therefore, the cooperating community agencies providing the clinical laboratory experiences share in the learning process of the L.P.N. student.

The student emerges from the community seeking educational experiences which will prepare him or her to return to the community in a more meaningful way. The primary focus in nursing curricula is to prepare the nurse to meet the health needs of society.

It is essential to provide positive clinical experiences in nursing programs to attain maximum development of the student. The first assignments are most important because the student develops attitudes and behaviors early in the program. Exposing the student to ill planned learning situations in the clinical facilities may wrongly influence the student's life experiences. (Quint, 1965)

Problems may arise when the student is assigned to the large general hospital during the first semester. Many acutely ill patients are assigned to the student who at this point has very limited knowledge. Involvement with complex equipment being used by patients can be frightening to an inexperienced student. The rapid pace and large number of members of the allied health professions can cause confusion. (Berzon, 1970)

It seems wise, therefore, to consider the selection of early clinical facilities in the area of extended care. The extended care facility need not be a nursing home. Many hospitals today have set up special extended care units where rehabilitation and basic nursing care are the focus of health care. In many cases, the extended care facility is the "limbo" between hospitalization and a custodial nursing home.

Assigning the student to specialty areas of the hospital helps to increase understanding of what happens in various departments. Better understanding between departments generally results. Working or observation roles in community agencies such as doctors' offices, community day care centers, County Health Clinics, and schools for exceptional children can broaden the scope of practical or professional nursing education. (Thompson, 1974)

Significance of the Study

The relevance of the problem to the educational setting of the L.P.N. student is to elicit program weaknesses in the clinical phase of the curricula. It is hoped that this study will enlighten the faculty in their endeavor to provide good learning experiences for the present and future classes.

The Coordinator meets annually with the administration of each cooperating agency for the purpose of verbally renewing the original contract. No formal evaluative process is undertaken by either party. Criticism is not always taken constructively and is seldom welcomed.

A single instructor may be biased in her opinion or have a personality conflict with the staff of a particular agency. Having presented the problems and concerns of faculty to administrators and supervisory staff in various community facilities, this writer believes the data compiled in this study will make the task easier and more readily accepted. Being able to reinforce opinion with statistical data will enable changes to be made intelligently and to the

benefit of both agencies. Ultimately, quality education and better patient care will evolve.

Statement of the Hypothesis

It was expected that changes in the clinical laboratory experiences of the College of Lake County L.P.N. students will be perceived as a result of the student involvement in the evaluation process.

METHOD

Subjects

S_g were twenty-seven students enrolled in the Class of 1974 Licensed Practical Nursing program at the College of Lake County in Grayslake, Illinois. Twenty-one of these students graduated on July 18, 1974 after successfully completing the one year certificate program. All S_g were female between the ages of 18-44. All S_g were required to participate in this evaluation and completed the rating scale form on the last day of assignment in each of the twelve scheduled clinical laboratory areas over a thirty-eight week period.

Procedure

S_g were informed by this writer, the Coordinator of the L.P.N. Program, of the need to evaluate the clinical experiences during their course of study. In anticipation of the practicum requirement for the Societal Factors module, a rating scale form was devised and explained to the students and instructors. At the completion of each rotation period,

the instructor assigned to the cooperating agency distributed the form to be completed during the post conference session. S_s remained anonymous and were encouraged to add comments.

Data Analysis

Ten items deemed essential for effective learning in the clinical facilities were evaluated using a rating scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest. (See Appendix III) Each experience was mathematically computed and if a rating of 3, average, was not obtained, the experience will be replaced with a more meaningful assignment for future students.

Expectation

It was expected that some of the cooperating agencies and/or departments will be omitted in the clinical experience plan (See Appendix V) and new facilities will be contacted for possible contractual agreement in the immediate future.

RESULTS

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The L.P.N. program at the College of Lake County is a one year certificate program consisting of the fall semester, spring semester, and an eight week summer session. Contracts are in effect between the college and six community agencies which provide the clinical facilities where students apply theory to practice. Within these six institutions, a total of 19 units or departments cooperated in the clinical laboratory experience plan for the Class of 1974.

Every student was assigned to the following unit or department for the same length of time but on a rotating basis. (See Appendix V): 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 3c. These areas were, therefore, evaluated by the total class. The last four weeks of the spring semester the class is divided into thirds and assigned to one of three nursing homes: 4a, 4b, or 4c. During the summer session, each student is assigned to one of three hospitals for equal time in the Obstetric and Pediatric Departments: 5a and 6a, 5b and 6b, or 5c and 6c.

On the last day in the department, the student completed the evaluation form (See Appendix III) consisting of 10 items on a 5 point rating scale indicating a poor to superior evaluation. The evaluation was based on the personal experience of the student and allowed for subjectivity by means of a section for additional comments. The number of S_g ranged from the highest, 27, to a low of 5 on any given evaluation due to rotation scheduling. Of the 27, 6 did not complete the program but their evaluations were included in the study because the anonymous aspect of the form prevented the researcher from

identifying responses. The following results were obtained which prove the hypothesis to be true and valid.

Special Services

During the 1973-74 school year, each L.P.N. student was assigned to five specialty departments at two of the hospitals in the community. The hospital personnel assumed the supervisory role and offered opportunities for learning by observation.

The following table depicts the rating of each of these departments and the mean of the 10 items evaluated. Two of the five departments received a below average rating. The other three received average ratings.

Two students felt they would consider seeking employment in ia after graduation. One student stated this was the greatest ...she had ever seen. One felt this was an excellent opportunity to see nursing in action. Two students really enjoyed ia and one considered the personnel "fantastic". Another student recommended more time in this area as a beneficial experience. Two students felt the personnel were engaged in trivial conversation and should have been more serious about nursing care rendered.

One student felt ib very interesting and personnel were willing to explain details of the department. Another student considered this to be a good experience while one felt she was shuffled around. One commented that this experience could be done away with as the equipment can be observed in the individual patient's room and it was unnecessary to spend time away

from the nursing care unit for this experience.

The personnel in unit 1c were considered friendly and willing to answer questions by 4 students. Eight students recommended shortening the experience from 4 - 5 days to 1 - 2 days. Three expressed dissatisfaction in being assigned to trivial duties when they would have been more content to give direct patient care. One enjoyed learning tray set-ups and autoclaving procedures.

One student considered 1d to be a totally worthless experience. Another suggested trying the same experience in another hospital. Another found no learning experience in the activities of this department.

Department 1e was the most highly lauded specialty experience. Fifteen students of the 24 who experienced this rotation commented on the congeniality of the personnel as well as their willingness to explain procedures and answer questions. Eight stated that more than one day should be planned for each student and that this was an excellent learning experience. One felt somewhat in the way due to a very busy schedule the morning of her assignment to the unit. (Refer to page 10 - Table 1. Evaluation of Specialty Departments)

Fall Semester Units

Three clinical experiences planned in correlation with the Fundamentals of Nursing course are designated as 2a, 2b, and 3a. Each experience consisted of four weeks on medical and medical-surgical units. Since 3a was also scheduled during the spring semester, this unit was evaluated after the student's second assignment.

ITEM	1a	1b	1c	1d	1e
1	4	3	3	3	4
2	4	3	2	3	4
3	3	3	2	3	3
4	3	2	3	2	4
5	4	3	3	3	4
6	4	4	4	4	4
7	4	3	3	3	4
8	4	3	3	3	4
9	3	2	4	2	4
10	3	2	3	3	4

\bar{x} 3.6 2.8 3.0 2.9 3.9

Table 1. Evaluation of Specialty Departments

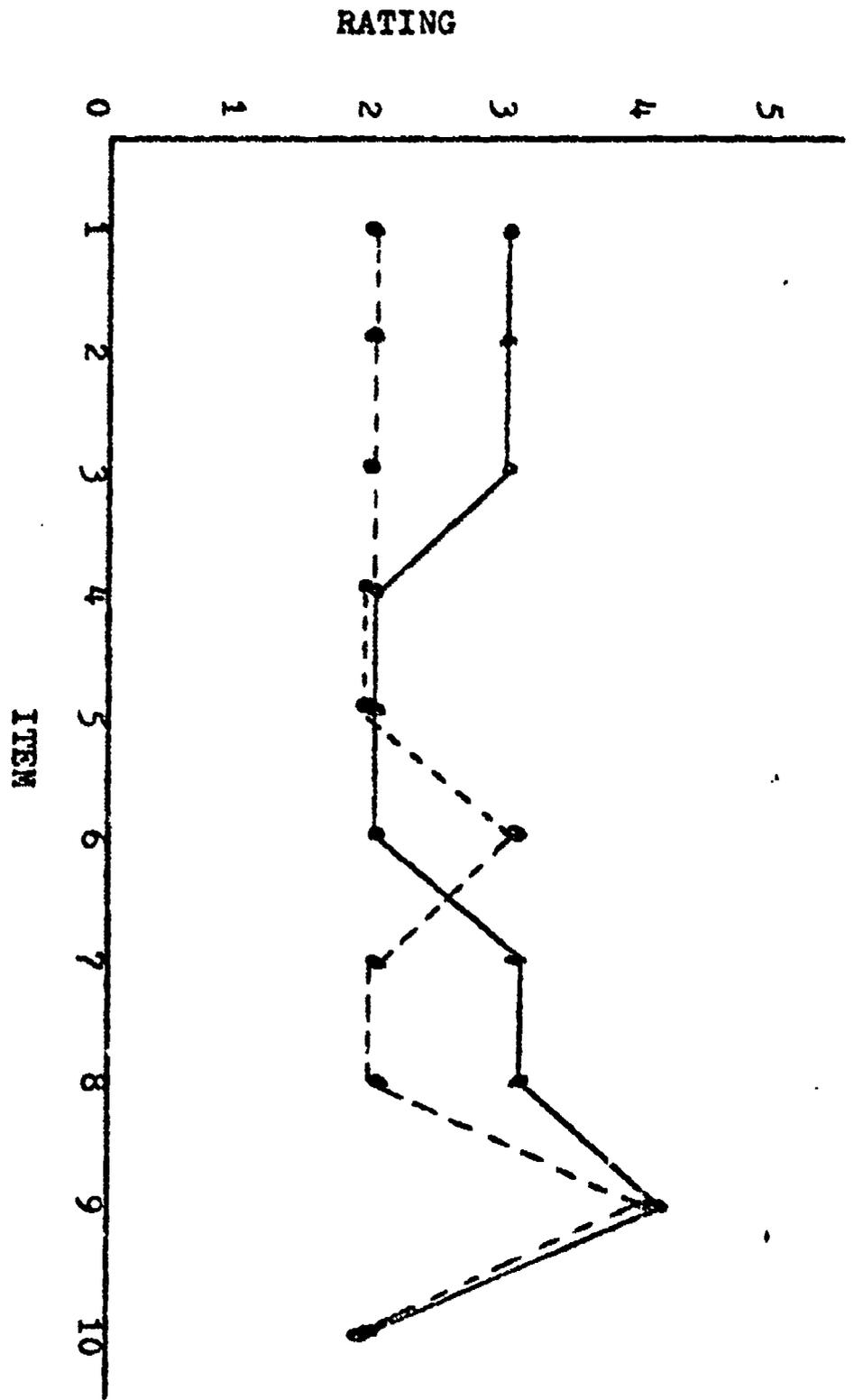
The mean for 2a was 2.7. One student felt she needed more psychiatric background prior to this assignment. Two felt the experience was valuable. Two were concerned over the lack of nursing care plans. One considered the atmosphere dismal and another labeled the unit as "dirty". Two believed the personnel were too busy to be bothered with students or patients.

The mean for 2b was 2.3. One student was very well satisfied with the educational value of this assignment. One considered the personnel unfriendly toward students and 1 stated she was blamed for an act she was not responsible for. Several students noted that the nursing care plans were not up-dated. One considered the nursing care given by the staff adequate but felt they did not act happy with their work. (Refer to page 12 - Graph 1. Evaluation of Fundamentals of Nursing Units)

Spring Semester Units

The main focus of the spring semester is medical-surgical nursing. In Graph 2, one can see the apparently quality educational setting on 3c. The mean of 3.8 was the third highest given in this evaluation. Students found the unit supervisor and personnel very cooperative and education minded. The type of patient care required was interesting and challenging. Four emphasized the variety of worthwhile experiences encountered.

On the negative side, Unit 3b received a mean rating of 2.3 and the comments of the students were most critical. A highly significant number of students, 16, stated in very explicit terms that the personnel were unfriendly and unjustly critical of them. One third of the students felt the unit was



Graph 1. Evaluation of Fundamentals of Nursing Units

— 2a X = 2.7
- - - 2b X = 2.3

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unorganized and unclean. Graduates gave a poor professional image. Five students believed there was a lack of learning experiences and too many geriatric patients. Four students enjoyed the experience.

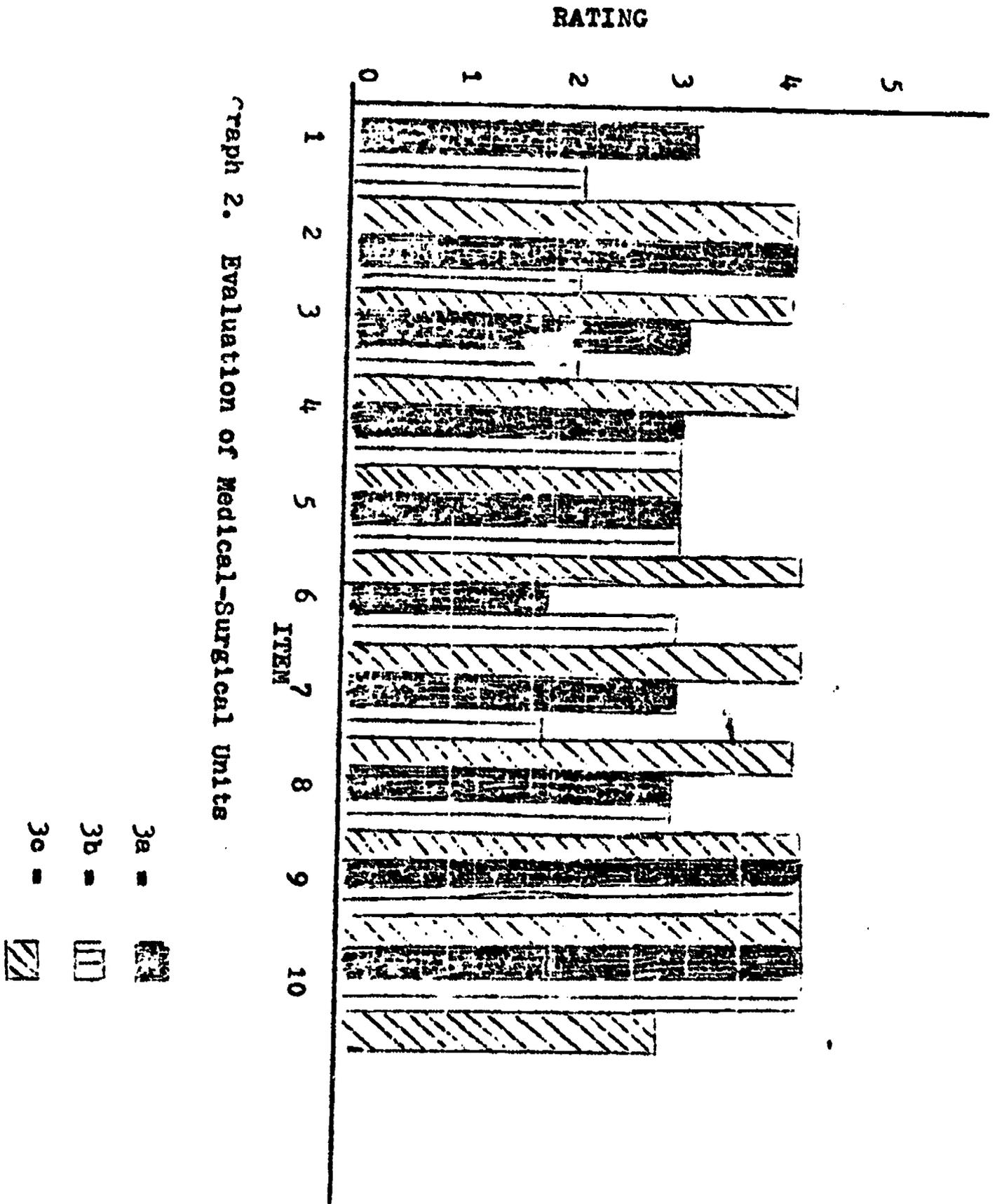
Unit 3a received a mean rating of 3.2. This unit received the least amount of additional comments. Four students felt the attitude of the professional nurses should be less critical. Several felt the lack of linen created a problem. One felt great satisfaction with experiences encountered on this unit. (Refer to page 14 - Graph 2. Evaluation of Medical-Surgical Units)

Nursing home 4a had a mean of 2.6. Comments included concern over the poor care of patients prior to students arrival in the morning, limited learning experiences, lack of linen, and insufficient planned activities for patients. The consensus was that the personnel were congenial and friendly. Two found the experience depressing.

Nursing home 4b received only 1 additional comment which was highly favorable and 4.4 was the mean, the highest received in this evaluation.

Unit 4c received the second highest mean of 3.9 and paragraphs of praiseworthy comments. This unit offered a totally new concept of patient care based on behavior modification which proved a challenge to the majority of students. Poor housekeeping and a lack of privacy for the patient were negative aspects encountered. (Refer to page 15 - Table 2. Evaluation of Nursing Homes)

Graph 2. Evaluation of Medical-Surgical Units



3a = [stippled box]
3b = [horizontal lines box]
3c = [diagonal lines box]

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x = 4a
 xx = 4b
 xxx = 4c

Item	1	2	3	4	5
1			x	xxx	xx
2		x	xx	xxx	
3		x		xx xxx	
4				x xx xxx	
5		x		xx xxx	
6	x			xx xxx	
7			x	xxx	xx
8				x xxx	xx
9			x	xxx	xx
10		x	xxx		xx

Table 2. Evaluation of Nursing Homes

Summer Session Units

Unit 5a received a very high rating of 4.0 and students attested to the willingness of the personnel to assist them in learning activities. Unit 5b received a 2.8 rating mainly due to the lack of orientation to the labor and delivery area. Personnel seemed highly critical and not receptive to students. 3.9 was the rating for 5c where the personnel were cooperative and student oriented. Being a small unit, however, confusion and on occasion over-lapping of assignments were cited. Generally, this was a pleasant experience.

Unit 6a received a 3.4 rating and 2 students expressed a dislike for pediatric nursing. One felt personnel performed procedures differently than students were taught to do them. Several felt there was good opportunity for diversified experiences. Two students were concerned over lack of good housekeeping. 6b and 6c both received a mean of 3.6. The students found 6b a favorable experience due to willingness of personnel to answer questions and work cooperatively. One complained that the nursing station was too congested. Unit 6c received only 2 comments which contradicted each other. One student felt the unit was disorganized while another considered it well organized. (See page 17 - Table 3 - Evaluation of Maternal-Child Health Experiences)

Employment Motivation

In the upper quartile, 87% were motivated toward employment due to experience in 4c and 83% toward 5c. Institutions receiving a rating of 25% to 75% were 1a, 1d, 1e, 2a, 3a, 3c, 4b, 5a, 6a, 6b, and 6c. Least inspiring units were: 1b, 1c, 2b, 3b, 4a, and 5b

ITEM	UNIT					
	5a	5b	5c	6a	6b	6c
1	4	2	4	3	4	3
2	4	2	4	4	3	3
3	4	2	4	4	3	3
4	4	3	4	3	3	4
5	4	3	4	3	3	4
6	4	4	4	3	4	4
7	4	2	4	3	4	4
8	4	2	4	3	4	4
9	4	4	4	4	4	4
10	4	4	3	4	4	3

\bar{x}	4.0	2.8	3.9	3.4	3.6	3.6

Table 3. Evaluation of Maternal-Child Health Experiences

UNIT	1a	1b	1c	1d	1e	2a	2b	3a	3b	3c	4a	4b	4c	5a	5b	5c	6a	6b	6c	
YES	N	25	25	25	24	24	27	26	26	25	26	9	6	8	8	8	8	8	8	5
	F	14	4	4	7	12	10	4	10	5	15	0	3	7	3	1	5	3	4	3
NO	F	56	16	16	29	50	37	15	39	20	57	0	50	87	37	13	83	37	50	60
	F	4	6	14	7	3	5	12	5	11	2	9	0	0	3	5	1	2	3	1
UNCERTAIN	F	16	24	56	29	13	19	46	19	44	7	100	0	0	37	61	17	26	37	20
	F	7	15	7	10	9	12	10	11	9	9	0	3	1	2	2	0	3	1	1
	F	28	60	28	42	37	44	39	42	36	36	0	50	13	26	26	0	37	13	20

Table 4. Employment Motivation Based Upon Unit Experiences



This research lends support to the contention that students are willing to evaluate their educational experiences and to offer constructive criticism. Educators should involve students in the process of evaluating matters relevant to their attainment of quality education.

This study represents the experiences of 1 class during a given time span. Personnel and other variables often change from year to year so the results of this research should not be the sole factor in making changes. Faculty evaluation should be included and appropriate administrative personnel should have a role in final decision making.

The purpose of this study was to initiate evaluation of the clinical experiences so that change might be effected to provide a more meaningful learning experience for the College of Lake County L.P.N. students.

Specific recommendations are:

1. Share results of the research with the L.P.N. program advisory committee at the December meeting. Elicit frank discussion and vote on program changes. Because many of the committee members are representatives of the institutions involved in this study, the identity of units cannot be revealed during the open meeting.
2. Call a meeting of the Assistant Dean of Business Services responsible for contractual agreements, the Assistant Dean of Career Programs, the chairman of the Biological and Health Sciences Division, the

- Coordinator and two faculty members to discuss the findings of this study and to vote on changes.
3. Present fall semester findings to students currently enrolled in the program to stimulate open discussion and compare subjective comments of the two groups of students. Note similar and dissimilar noteworthy statements.
 4. Coordinator should meet with the supervisor of each unit, the Director of Nursing, and appropriate administrator to present data pertaining to individual unit. Comparison should not be made with other local agencies involved.
 5. Delete experiences deemed unfavorable by students only after steps #1, 2, 3, and 4 above have been completed and other alternatives have been given due consideration. Two fall semester changes were put into effect for the present school year as a result of this study. Experience 1d was eliminated completely and 2a was changed to another unit in the same institution. An evaluation of the newly assigned unit is being done by 32 students this fall to determine whether the adverse situations experienced on 2a were unit or institutional weaknesses.
 6. Visit extended care facilities in the community for consideration of adding to the experience plan for reasons cited in the review of the literature.
 7. Conduct an evaluation of clinical experiences by

the Coordinator and faculty who are the supervisors of the students in all units with the exception of the specialty departments. This evaluation will be for the present school year and the same form as that used by the students for this study will be used. Correlation will be made between faculty and student ratings in July 1975.

The writer prefers not to dissolve contracts between community agencies and the College of Lake County L.P.N. Program. It is hoped, that in the event of poor learning experiences or problems which cannot be resolved in a given area, another unit within the same institution might be substituted. The exception would be mutual agreement between both consenting contractual parties.

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COLLEGE OF LAKE COUNTY
PRACTICAL NURSING PROGRAM

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EVALUATION OF CLINICAL LAB EXPERIENCES

Cooperating Agency: _____

Department or Unit: _____

Semester and Year: _____

Instructions: Please circle the number which most accurately describes your personal experience in the department using the following rating scale.

- 1 = poor
- 2 = below average
- 3 = average
- 4 = above average
- 5 = superior
- N/A = not applicable

1. Attitude of institutional personnel toward LPN students.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. Availability of experiences for students.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. Procedures available for application of theory to practice.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4. Completeness and accuracy of nursing care plans and the Kardex.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5. Quality of nursing care given patients prior to students arrival on the unit.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6. Availability of linen and supplies.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7. Communication between personnel and students.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8. Willingness of team leaders to answer questions or accept report of students regarding patient assignment.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9. Conference room provisions.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10. Locker area.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

I would be inclined to seek employment in this institution after graduation as a result of this experience.

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Uncertain

Additional Comments:

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