Patricia Benner: Five levels of skill acquisition

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Based on the Dreyfus skill acquisition model, Benner's novice to expert theory proposes that learners undergo five stages to develop competency: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert (Benner, 1984). In this paper, I will explore how Benner's five levels of skills acquisition apply to different areas - my current clinical practice as a registered nurse and graduate student, and how the knowledge acquired in the process will affect my next career as a family nurse practitioner.

Benner's Level of Current Clinical Practice

In my clinical nursing practice, I consider myself proficient and capable of seeing things as a whole instead of focusing on minor aspects. By analyzing the patient's records and situation as a whole, I understand the patient's condition comprehensively. Throughout my nursing and surgical experiences, I have learned to examine the patient's changing situation from different perspectives at various levels. For instance, in a recent experience, I noticed that a patient was septic, having tachycardia and hypotensive. I knew I had to respond to this situation differently than stable patients. At the same time, I needed to attend to other anxious patients and contact family members waiting for updates on their care plans. Despite these challenges, I remained calm and attentive, paid attention to the patient's details, prioritized the situation, developed a plan to address it, and applied it thoroughly. This level of experience comes from my nursing practice. Benner (1992) emphasized that proficient nurses no longer depend on predetermined goals for the organization; they exhibit increased confidence in their knowledge and abilities and actively engage with the patient and family. Personally, I can be considered proficient in Benner's five levels of skill acquisition.

Benner's Level of Graduate Education

I consider myself competent during my graduate education. After completing my graduate education, I aim to become proficient in nursing education. My graduate education in nursing is an extension of my undergraduate nursing, which will further lead me to The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP.) After completing my DNP, a terminal degree in nursing science, I aim to become an expert in nursing education. With my undergraduate experience, I view my assignments as actions regarding goals and plans during my studies. I work efficiently and organize to ensure the successful completion of my assignments assigned by professors, which I believe I am in a competent category of Benner's skill acquisition; as Benner (1984) emphasized, the level of efficiency increases as one becomes competent and can see actions in terms of goals or plans to perform their task.

Using What is Learned to Transition into Family Nurse Practitioner

Learning is a lifelong and continuous process that can be achieved through education and enhanced by work experience. Pursuing graduate education and continuing to work as a nurse will help me develop critical thinking skills, gain more nursing experience, and meet patients' expectations and concerns. According to Benner (1984), expert nurses intuitively understand the situation and can identify the problem area without losing time. As a nurse practitioner, I plan to become an expert in Benner's skill acquisition model in clinical nursing science to provide high-quality care to my patients.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Benner's novice to expert theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how learners develop clinical competency over time in clinical practice. Besides nursing, this model also has implications for graduate education and career advancement, as I showed above. By understanding the stages of clinical competence, nurses can better support and

learn from each other's expertise. Benner's theory has taught me that learning is a continuous process and that I still have room to grow; I still have opportunities to learn analytical abilities to handle new situations to become expertise in clinical nursing and higher education.

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