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**FORMATION OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES  
IN HEALTH CARE SPECIALISTS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN  
AND ADULTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**<https://doi.org/10.34739/sn.2022.22.09>

**Abstract:** The formation of professional competencies in health care professionals to work with children and adults with special needs requires that their training be aimed at: performing a primary assessment of the general condition and development of persons with disabilities, according to the methodology for assessing their needs ; elaboration of an individual plan for each person; filling in the "Card for assessment of the needs of persons with disabilities"; the conclusion and recommendations for working with them. Defining, performing and evaluating the activities of health care professionals requires them to focus on the problem of people with special needs. This presupposes the satisfaction of their vital needs, requirements and needs. People with special needs have different types of disabilities: sensory, physical, mental, multiple disabilities; communication disorders; specific learning disabilities; autism spectrum disorders; emotional and behavioral disorders. Healthcare professionals must be able to collect the necessary information, process it and specify it, through appropriate interventions, and subsequently evaluate the results obtained. This requires logic and systematicity to solve the given health problem of the person with special needs. All this concerns a complete intellectual process.

**Keywords:** *formation, professional competencies, specialists, health, care, children, adults, special, needs*

**Introduction**

The formation of professional competencies in health care professionals to work with children and adults with special needs requires training in higher education. In their daily professional activities, they work with children and adults with disabilities. Well-trained people know the damage and anomalies of the human body. The comprehensive training of health care professionals to work with children and adults with special needs

provides them with a high professional qualification for determining, performing and evaluating the activities related to their own role in the care of persons with disabilities..

Completing the full course of study in the discipline “Practical foundations of nursing. Nursing care for children and adults with disabilities”, included in the Unified state requirements of health care specialists, they form knowledge, skills and professional competencies in the field of health care provided for children and adults with disabilities [Zheleva, 2004].

Healthcare professionals are closest to the suffering person and his family, both in the hospital and in his home. They are best acquainted with the problems of people with special needs. In the process of their work, they make observations, receive information about people with disabilities. Their high professional competence is valuable for the overall healing process of the suffering person. Their training presupposes their high medical and social position, which enables them to gather the most complete and accurate information about the social history of the disease [Zheleva, 2004].

Training for working with people with special needs increases the qualification, competencies and creative realization of health professionals. The various somatic and mental pathologies are most often combined, so health care professionals must be trained to accept that the defect is the basis that makes personality development particularly specific and different. It creates difficulties in the development process and stimulates the search for ways and means of mechanisms and compensations. This determines the specific role of the specialist in his health and social work with people with special needs. Trained and well-qualified professionals help people maintain or regain their health.

The formation of professional competencies in health care specialists for work with children and adults with special needs is related to the definition, implementation and evaluation of their activities related to the care of people with disabilities - children or adults. Health care is focused on the health problem that led the person with special needs to hospitalization in the medical institution [Zheleva, 2004]. The specifics of the formation of professional competencies in health professionals helps to gather the necessary information about the sick person, to process and specify, through appropriate interventions, and subsequently to evaluate the results of their activities. Healthcare requires logic and system to solve the given health problem of the sick person [Krusteva, 2005].

Healthcare professionals apply their formed competencies, according to the specific features of development, education, training, domestic-labor-professional training and comprehensive social adaptation of persons with different in nature and severity psycho-physical defects in sensorimotor, intellect, speech and behavior [Mutafov, 1994].

The formation of professional competencies in health care specialists for working with children and adults with special needs requires from them sufficient knowledge, skills and habits for general and specialized health education. The knowledge, skills and competencies formed in them concerning the health education of children and adults, which are completely somatically and mentally normal and clinically healthy, give them the opportunity to make a thorough analysis of the pathological changes. And the knowledge, skills and competencies for specialized health education allows them to handle its main components: somatic-functional, neuro-analytical, social-adaptive, sexual-generational, household-ecological, ergot-professional education. They apply the specialized health education to children, adolescents, young people and adults with various anomalies, defects, disabilities and disorders in their psycho-physical development. In case of deviation in the development of man, there are qualitative changes in his mental processes. They are caused by the lasting impact of environmental factors that have a negative impact on the processes related to the behavior of the individual and his socialization [Krusteva, 2005].

In the process of training health care professionals, emphasis is placed on the increased demand for increasing their competencies for providing medical and social assistance. Each person with special needs has their own, unique and inimitable physical and intellectual personal qualities and reacts differently to the same factors of upbringing and training. For this reason, every person – child or adult with disabilities should be provided with maximum opportunities for full development and formation [Karagiozov, 2003].

Highly qualified health care professionals are trained to work with people with special needs and are able to analyze the factors affecting health at the individual, family and community levels. The effective implementation of their new role in the medical institution and in the home of people with special needs requires that their care be attributed to their individual characteristics and to the members of their family.

Healthcare should be designed to suit the lifestyle of any person with special needs – a child or an adult patient.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the scientific communication is to reveal and outline the organizational pedagogical conditions and the effectiveness of the formation of professional competencies in health care professionals to work with children and adults with special needs.

## **Material and methods**

**The objectives of the study are:** to reveal the role and specifics of the formation of professional competencies in health care professionals to work with children and adults with special needs; to study the effectiveness and significance of the compulsory course “Practical bases of nursing care” included in the Unified State Requirements. Nursing care for children and adults with disabilities ”; to establish the degree of satisfaction of health care professionals to work with children and adults with special needs. The following **methods** were used in the research process: survey, programmed interview, purposefully included observation and pedagogical experiment. **The object of the study** are students majoring in "Nurse" of the Medical University of Varna, Branch of Sliven and working health care professionals with special needs in Sliven. **The subject of the study** is the process and conditions under which the formation of professional competencies in health care professionals to work with children and adults with special needs is a condition and factor for improving their quality of life when working with them.

**The expected results** from the training of the health care specialists for work with persons with special needs can be presented as: the student – future health care specialist to receive the necessary scientific information on the problems of the theory and practical orientation of the health care provided for the disabled ; to form in him knowledge, skills, habits and competencies for the need to provide proper, quality and scientifically sound health care for those in need - children or an adult with special needs; to form in the student the necessary moral and ethical qualities of the future specialist in health care; to form professional competencies in health care specialists for working with children and adults with special needs.

## Results and discussion

The analysis of the study shows that the formation of professional competencies in health care professionals to work with children and adults with special needs provides 98% awareness that children and adults with disabilities are members of the society in which we live and occupy their place in the multidimensional a system called public health. They need a high quality of life provided by highly qualified professionals.

99% of the respondents share that the patient with special needs, as a central figure in the society, should be considered as an individual served by the health care specialists, understanding / not understanding and actively participating / not participating in the preparation of the health care plan for him.

Respondents share that at the end of the study of the course “Practical foundations of nursing. Nursing care for children and adults with disabilities” realize that people with special needs are members of the society in which we live and take their place in it. They, as a central figure in society, should be seen as individuals served by highly qualified professionals preparing the health care plan. The result of the planned care for people with special needs is observed when they are able to take care of themselves or with the help of a companion / specialist.

The purposeful included observation showed that the patient, according to the degree of disability, should, as much as possible, participate in the planning and implementation of health care. It is his choice for them, and health care professionals are obliged to provide him with the necessary assistance to make the right choice. If they gain his trust and his condition is critical and he cannot make his own decisions, he can rely on their actions, but he must never feel that he is in the hands of strangers. Not to be overlooked is the fact that a patient with a disability must be aware of his or her desire, if his or her condition allows, to adopt a health plan that is beneficial to his or her health.

The high percentage of positive-minded health care professionals shows that the formation of professional competencies in them for working with children and adults with special needs is a result of the developed health care plan.

95% of the participants in the pedagogical experiment share their satisfaction with the formation of professional competencies for working

with children and adults with special needs. The effectiveness of their professional knowledge, skills and competencies shows that they appear as a basic, complete and complete substitute for what the patient cannot do alone, due to insufficient capabilities, strength, will and knowledge. They help him with the realization of his daily needs of life or with regard to those activities which he performs without help in good health.

The study makes it possible to draw conclusions: thanks to the good theoretical and practical training of health care professionals, conditions are created for the formation of professional competencies in health care professionals to work with children and adults with special needs; they are the people who are trained and have the knowledge, skills and competencies to offer 24-hour continuous care to patients in need. They are the ones who help them lead full lives, cope with their disabilities or die with dignity when death is imminent.

The results obtained from the programmed interview show that the formation of professional competencies in health care professionals to work with children and adults with special needs allow to analyze and assess the patient's condition; allow the preparation of a proper health care plan, necessary and effective, which must be applied to the patient and remain within the medical treatment plan for the injured person.

100% of the participants in the purposeful included observation are of the opinion that the formed professional competencies of the health care specialists are basic in the realization of the health care when working with children and adults with special needs; they have the main professional task of protecting the health of children and adults; this is achieved by planning, organizing and providing quality health care for them. Protecting the health and life of the nation is a priority of healthcare. Children and adults with disabilities are subject to health care provided by health care professionals working in specialized medical institutions. In order to be cared for effectively and correctly, healthcare professionals must be aware of the underlying injuries and abnormalities of the various organs and systems in the human body, as human disabilities are of varying degrees and nature.

## **Conclusion**

The formation of professional competencies in health care specialists for working with children and adults with special needs requires individualiza-

tion and personalization of care for the needy. Humanity is a constant and enduring value of the individual. Determining the needs of the patient with disabilities for health care and preparing a plan for them are taken into account: the main symptoms and syndromes of the disease; mental depression; paralysis; water-electrolyte disturbance; the patient's age; the cultural level of the patient; the emotional balance of the patient; the socio-cultural and economic status of the patient; the patient's physical and intellectual abilities; the environment in which these care is provided.

The formation of professional competencies in health care specialists for working with children and adults with special needs has an impact on the quality of care provided for children and adults with special needs. Each healthcare is a creative element, thanks to which specialists prepare an individual care plan for each patient. The health care provided to children and adults with special needs at all times must be planned, arranged in writing in a sequential order depending on their performance.

### **Inferences**

Formation of professional competencies in a health care specialist for work with children and adults with special needs allows them to carry out competent activity: special care for children and adults with disabilities; with intellectual disability; with disorders of speech, vision, hearing; with deviations in behavior; with physical settlements; with autism; formation of skills and competencies for application of social adaptation, rehabilitation and habilitation in users with special needs. The plan is dynamic and changes according to the patient's condition.

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