

*Original Article*

## Proposed Iranian national standards in nursing and midwifery postgraduate education system

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### Abstract

**Background:** The first stage of the accreditation, process as the most important way of assurance and improvement of the quality of high education process is collection of standards. To describe present and desirable quality of nursing and midwifery postgraduate education via accreditation process in Iran, we decided to compile applicable standards in this field, using available international standards as well as suggestion made by nursing and midwifery education experts in Iran.

**Methods:** This was a multiple triangulation study carried out in the years 2005-2006. First, international standards were extracted from the World Wide Web; then, these standards were used as well as the viewpoints of supervisors to set appropriate national standards. In the third stage, Delphi method was used to take votes. 50 experts in nursing and midwifery postgraduate education of the country were selected by purposive sampling and their suggestions, regarding desirability and applicability of these standards in Iran were used. Results of this stage were analyzed via descriptive statistics using SPSS software.

**Results:** 90% of international standards had appropriate level in Iran. Final comments suggested 28 standards and 224 criteria in master level and 21 standards and 81 criteria in 6 distinct domains in doctorate level of nursing and midwifery.

**Conclusion:** The necessary changes were made in standards based on the experts' viewpoints and the proposed Iranian national standards in nursing and midwifery postgraduate education system was conducted.

**Key words:** International educational standards, postgraduate education, nursing and midwifery

IJNMR 2008; 13(2): 41-42

In recent years, the assurance and improvement of the quality of the higher education is one of the most important problems of expert in the field of nursing and midwifery postgraduate education.<sup>1</sup> As the means of quality of higher education is not obvious, judgment about it is very difficult; so, the evaluation is important as the way to ensure quality and to judge about the improvements.<sup>2</sup> Accreditation is a faithful method to guarantee the improvement of the quality of postgraduate education.<sup>3</sup> In 1984, Scriven said that accreditation have

seven components.<sup>4</sup> In this process, standard-designing is one of the major components.<sup>5</sup>

We assessed this research to describe present and desirable quality of nursing and midwifery postgraduate education process in Iran and to compile proposed Iranian national standards in this field.

### Methods

This was a multiple Triangulation study carried out in years 2005-2006, in School of Nursing and Midwifery of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences.

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Research Article of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, No: 385004

The research population included the educational manager, postgraduate manager and midwifery group manager of nursing and midwifery schools of medical universities in Iran, such as Isfahan, Ahvaz, Shahid Beheshti, Tabriz, Tehran, Shiraz, Kerman, Guilan, Mashhad, Olum Behzisti, Baghiatallah, and the members of Iranian managing board of the nursing and midwifery education. The number of samples was 50 and they were selected based on the criteria mentioned in objectives of the study.

In the first step of study, sufficient documents on international standards were gathered from the World Wide Web, using these keywords: International educational standards, postgraduate education, nursing and midwifery. In the second step, using the gathered international standards from the 34 countries, we prepared global standards of the characteristics of nursing and midwifery postgraduate education system in Iran. In the third step, based on Delphi technique, questionnaire of standards was sent to the research population and they were asked to suggest their ideas regarding how to adjust the standards for Iran.

90% of the questionnaires were returned. Reviewing the experts' ideas, the standards which found to be in harmony with the situation of Iranian society by 70% of participants were selected and the final standards were edited.

## Results

Final standards in 10 domains in master level of nursing and midwifery education in Iran were as following: mission and goals, program staff, curriculum, students, faculty members, re-

sources and facilities, teaching and learning processes, evaluation, research, and graduates.

Final standards in doctorate level of nursing and midwifery education in Iran were composed of mission and goals, students, faculty members, curriculum, resources and facilities, and evaluation.

## Discussion

The findings of study showed that most of the international standards had appropriate level of acceptability in 90% of cases and only issues such as letters of recommendation, personal interview, provide evidence of ability to speak English and submission evidence of competence for admission in master program had lower appropriate level. The most important reason for lack of appropriateness in these cases could be the situation of nursing and midwifery postgraduate education in Iran.

The items scored 95-100% were used exactly as they were; those scored 70-95% were edited based on the received suggestions as well as research advisors' comments, and the standards scored below 70% were omitted from the list.

The researchers hope that the policy makers of the nursing education system use the results of this study to solve the problem of education and improve the quality of nursing and midwifery postgraduate training system in our country. Also, they declare that have no conflict of interest in this study and they have surveyed under the research ethics.

Note: All the standards are available in the final report of the research number 385004 from the Isfahan Medical University research archive.

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