Abstract

School nurses are favorably positioned to play an essential role in both primary and secondary prevention and can be among the first to identify students with substance use disorder. However, for school nurses to succeed in this role, a determination must be made regarding their current level of knowledge of the screening tools for the identification of those who are using drugs and the subsequent referral of these students for appropriate treatment. Based on a review of the literature, there is a nationwide epidemic related to substance abuse in this country which does not discriminate regarding the vulnerable adolescent population. Studies have shown the use of trained behavioral health counselors in schools that support the use of school-based Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) programs; however, there has been no determination of the cost-effectiveness of utilizing school nurses as gatekeepers to screening students in rural Pennsylvania (PA) school settings. Currently, the literature suggests that there have been no studies to date on the lived experience of school nurses' perceptions of barriers and facilitators in the identification of students with substance use disorder. A qualitative research design will be used to acquire a greater understanding of the phenomenon of barriers and facilitators in identifying students at risk among school nurses in rural areas. Discoveries from this research may increase attention to the resources needed in rural areas to assist nurses in this public health epidemic and suggest avenues to improve the identification of students, thus decreasing the adolescent substance abuse rates.

Keywords: School Nurse, Substance use Among Adolescents, Rural School Districts, SBIRT, KTA Framework, Pennsylvania, Substance Use Disorder, Substance Abuse