THE EVERYDAY REALITIES OF SCHOOL NURSES’ EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS: A PRELIMINARY FINDING

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Background
Nowadays, nurses play an important role in providing primary health care in various community settings. In particular, a special group of school nurses have devoted themselves to providing direct health care as well as health education to children living with disabilities in special schools. However, there is no consensus on the job description for school nurses to facilitate the special caring role.

Aim
To explore and understand the experiences of Chinese school nurses in Hong Kong special schools caring for children and adolescents with disabilities.

Method
A qualitative study using a phenomenological approach with in-depth interviews was carried out to capture the detailed experiences of four school nurses caring for children and adolescents with disabilities in special schools in Hong Kong.

Findings
The essential components of a school nurse were identified as six related elements that emerged from the data – organizational structure, interpersonal communication, transacting, continuity of care, continuing education and culture.

Conclusion
This preliminary finding presents an insight into the experiences of school nurses’ in special schools in Hong Kong, especially in caring for children and adolescents with special health needs. It is important to have a common understanding of the experiences of school nursing in special schools. A better understanding of these nursing experiences would help to clarify how Chinese school nurses in special schools might contribute to improving the health status of children and adolescents with special needs, thereby helping special schools to become healthy schools. Currently, there is no policy statement in Hong Kong on school nurses in providing health services to school children with special needs.