The role of the school nurse based on Urie Bronfenbrenners ecological systems theory

Introduction
The role of the school nurse has changed and, due to the current health spectrum of school children and new laws regulating documentation and work practices, it is under constant development. The school nurse’s work includes promoting school children’s health, both on the individual and group level. The increasing psychosocial illness among school children requires new challenges and/or changed work practices. Inferring theories and models can be a way to clarify the school nurse’s role for themselves, as well as for school children and their families, school health staff, managers and decision makers.

Aim
The aim is to describe school nurses’ challenges and changing role based on Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory.

Method
The model is based on the results from empirical studies conducted on the activity of school nurses. Various aspects of caring for a schoolchild/family are integrated with health promoting measures, determinants of health, ethical challenges, and the needs for documentation.

Conclusion
Clarifying school nurses’ role with a theoretical model as premise, can facilitate both theirs and others’ understanding of that school nurses can provide in their profession. The model can also be helpful in planning and prioritizing in collaboration with managers and other decision makers in the system.

Results
The result is illustrated in the form of a figure based on the different parts of Bronfenbrenner’s model in the micro, meso, exo and macro systems.

Figure. The microsystem is closest to the child and contains structures as family, school staff and mates. At this level the relationships have impact in directions both away from and towards the child. The mesosystem provides the connections and relations between the different microsystems. The exosystem defines the larger social systems in which the child does not function directly but has impact on the microlevel structure such as parent’s workplace, school resources and the municipality. The macrosystem level comprises of e.g. cultural values, customs and laws influencing the interactions at all other layers. The model describes the school nurse as a collaborator and bridge builder where health promotion of universal, selective and indicated level of both the individual and the group perspective are central.