Nurses and Protection of Patient’s Rights

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Assessment of the knowledge and practice of trained nurses in protecting the patient’s rights and factors which interfere in protecting the patient’s rights.

Objectives
(1) To determine the knowledge of the trained nurses regarding protecting the patients’ rights.
(2) To determine the practice of the trained nurses in protecting the patients’ rights.
(3) To determine the factors which limit the nurses from protecting the patient’s rights.

A right is a claim one person has to, a responsibility or duty on the part of another person. Rights and responsibilities move in tandem. For every right, there is correlative duty or obligation. Rights are green and red traffic lights showing where people can stop and where people can proceed. Rights are for the people and accorded by the people and the duties, rights imply are imposed upon and accepted by people as well. Rights are guarantee of an individual’s ability to perform an action. A right is a justified option or permission to do, to have to claim that which one regards as one’s due. To have a right is to be free to exercise it or without being blamed or punished for exercising it or not exercising it. When the right is violated, set aside or overridden in favor of some other right or value, the person whose right was violated or set aside has the right to get compensation.

Today’s patient is viewed as an active member of health team rather than a passive recipient of care. Average citizen of today is much more knowledgeable about the complicated mechanism of human body. He knows that he has the right to question the treatment he is being given, to have a say in this treatment and to be kept informed of his progress. There has been an active and growing consumer movement in the health field in recent years. Increasing public awareness of health issues and rising cost of health services are some of the factors contributing to this movement. The patient wants to be involved in the treatment decision.

A nurse to be effective needs to have high degree of knowledge, including knowledge regarding the rights of his/her client. When you know the patients’ rights, you know where you stand, where your patient stands and where others stand. Nurses have duties to facilitate patient’s exercise of rights in appropriate ways. The nurse should be able to critically evaluate the legal and institutional rights by reference to human rights and should act as patients’ advocate.

Review of Literature
An ethnographic study was conducted by Woogara, J. (2005) to determine the extent to which patients’ right to privacy and dignity are respected in 3 acute wards with surgical & medical patients in a large district hospital using non-participant observation and unstructured interviews with patients (n = 55) and staff (n = 12). The finding shows that nursing staff had little awareness of the importance of Human Rights Act.

Aveyard, H (2004) has conducted a qualitative study to explore the way in which nurses obtain consent prior to nursing procedures. Data from 6 focus groups & 100 critical incidents were collected through in depth interviews of qualified nurses using purpose sampling in 2 teaching hospitals in England. The data obtained from the study were explored, which showed that most of the nurses are aware that they cannot administer care without patients’ consent.

Kool, S. and Linnard (2005) had done an ethnographic study to investigate the impact of treatment refusal by the parents in pediatric acute care settings. 20 in-depth interviews with nurses were conducted. The impact of the situation on the nurses’ health & stress levels, and functional status, emotional feeling associated with possible loss of guardianship & subsequent mandated treatment were explored which led to a deeper understanding of the complexities of the ethical dilemma surrounding treatment refusal in parents.

Sahlsien et al (2003) had conducted a qualitative study to investigate nurses’ understanding of patient participation in patient care. 31 registered Swedish
nurses from 5 hospitals were interviewed in which four properties, describing nurse’s approach & procedures constitute patient participation (therapeutic approach, focus on research, opportunities for influence and interpersonal procedure) which are crucial for patient participation were identified.

**Research Methodology**

**Design** - Descriptive survey

**Population** - All nurses of a selected Hospital in Kerala

**Sample** - 80 Trained Nurses

**Sampling method** - Convenient sampling

**Setting** - Nursing service department of a selected private hospital in Kerala.

**Data Collection:**
30 May 2005 to 4 June 2005

**Variables:**
- Demographic and professional characteristics.
- Knowledge on protecting patients’ rights.
- Practice on protecting patients’ rights.
- Factors interfere in protecting the patients’ rights.

Assumptions, hypothesis, sampling criteria, delimitations and recommendations are made.

**Description of the Tool**
A self-administered questionnaire is used to elicit the information, which includes four parts:

**PART- 1:** Demographic Perorma consisting of age, gender, educational qualification, area of work, foreign experience, membership in professional body and participation in in-service education.

**PART- 2:** Assessment of the knowledge of the trained nurses on protecting patients’ rights (28 items).

**PART- 3:** Assessment of the practice of the trained nurses in protecting patients’ rights (25 item).

**PART- 4:** Assessment of the factors interfere in protecting the patient’s right (13 factors) which included shortage of time, lack of knowledge, lack of experience, lack of role models in this area, restrictions by the hospital policies, lack of autonomy & independence, increased workload and other factors if any.

**Content validity** of the tool was established by sending the tool to 10 subject experts.

**Pilot study** was conducted on 16 trained nurses in a selected hospital.

**Findings**
- The mean knowledge score was 63 ± 10 compared to the maximum score of 84. The mean percentage (78%) of knowledge score shows that the nurses have good knowledge about patients’ rights.
- Maximum number of subjects (20%) scored in the range of 61-65 and the least number of subjects (2%) were in the range of 81-85.
- More than half (56%) of the subjects have moderate level of knowledge about the patients’ rights. Only one third of the subjects (37%) have high level of knowledge.
- Less than one fourth of the subjects have adequate knowledge about the right for safe environment (26%), and right to know the identity of the health personnel (22%). Most of the subjects have high degree of knowledge about the right for respect & dignity (87%) and right for confidentiality of health information (76%). Only 38% of the subjects know that the patients have the right to express their concerns & 15% have no knowledge about this.
- The mean percentage was 75%, which shows that majority is protecting patients’ rights in their nursing practice.
- More than one fourth (28%) scored below 17 out of maximum score of 25. Only 36% of the subjects are protecting the Patients’ rights satisfactorily.

**Bibliography**