INTRODUCTION

In the early 60's, nursing leaders were trying to develop a unique professional identity. Concomitant with developments of the theoretical base of nursing, the clinical role of the nurse was extended and expanded in a number of specialist areas.

A nurse acting at par with professional standards while practicing, many of these risks and dangers can be averted. Nurses must know the law that governs her profession to avoid such suits against her. The knowledge of legal responsibilities is integral with the expanding clinical role, and a logical application of the planned, systematic, and focused care, which should be the goal of Modern Nursing (Shaw 1998).

The Supreme Court has confirmed that the patients receiving deficient services from the medical practitioners and hospitals are entitled to claim damages under Consumer Protection Act 1986 (Yawad, B.S. 1996).

The nurses must keep pace with the changing needs and situations by equipping themselves with information. These may include computerization in hospitals, organ transplants, genetic manipulation, artificial insemination, euthanasia, sex determination or amniocentesis etc.

For the implementation of high quality of nursing practice

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in the world of latest medical and technological advances a good knowledge of legal responsibilities is a necessity.

OBJECTIVES
1. To assess the knowledge of legal responsibilities in patient care among nursing graduates.
2. To compare the knowledge of legal responsibilities in patient care among Diploma and B.Sc. nursing graduates.
3. To find out the relationship of knowledge score of nursing graduates with the variables such as (a) age (b) academic education (c) work experience (d) exposure to In-service education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive comparative approach was adopted for the study. Structured questionnaire schedule was developed.

The tool used had two parts: 1) to obtain demographic data i.e. age, academic qualification, work experience etc. 2) Legal terms, safe environment, professional confidence, negligence, basic rights, fundamental duties, admission/transfer/discharge/death, legal control, medical-legal cases, with total 70 knowledge items. Data from a sample of 91 nursing graduates was obtained.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings of the study according to the objectives revealed that:

(A) The Nursing Graduates' overall knowledge of legal responsibilities was good. The overall knowledge score (LRKS) was 71.43% in the areas that were directly related to patient care i.e., fundamental duties, safe environment, maintaining professional confidence, negligence and admission, transfer discharge and property (ATDP).

The Nursing graduates need a well-conceived education programme on specific areas of legal aspects such as legal terms, basic rights, legal control and medical-legal cases because their knowledge was low in these areas.

(B) The B.Sc. Nursing graduates exhibited better (Mean% = 71.43%) legal responsibility knowledge score than the Diploma graduates (Mean% = 68.5).

(C) Age, as a variable does not seem to have effect on knowledge, as revealed by this study. The B.Sc. Nursing graduates in the age group 20-30 years scored higher mean (50.18) than diploma graduates (47.73). But in the category of age above 30 years comparison could not be possible due to negligible (n=1) number of samples. Comparison within the Diploma graduates revealed that the sample having higher age (> 30 years) had
better (mean = 49) knowledge score than the sample of 20-30 years (47.73). But it was not statistically significant.

(D) Level of academic qualification does not influence knowledge of legal responsibility, though the mean scores of Diploma and B.Sc. (N) graduates in the (B.A./B.Sc. pass) category was higher (50.44 & 53.50 respectively) as compared to 10-2 pass (47.48 and 49.79 respectively).

(E) There was no significant difference in knowledge of legal responsibilities among nurses with varying years of experience.

(F) The In-service education does play an important role in the enhancement of knowledge. But the relationship of LRKS with In-service education was not statistically significant because a full-fledged programme is not there for the graduates while in service.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

(A) The study may be replicated on a larger sample spread over different hospitals to correlate and validate the findings.

(B) Studies may be conducted to assess the attitude and practices of nurses regarding legal responsibilities in patient care.

(C) The effectiveness of a specific education programme on legal responsibilities of nurses should be evaluated.

(D) KAP studies can be conducted on other groups of nursing personnel viz. MPHW's, ANM's, TBA's and compared.

(E) Various areas of hospitals and community may be included in the study.

(F) Research related to Ethics and legislation in nursing should be equipped with safe and good quality machines/ equipment and regular inspections done. Nurses' knowledge and practice may be evaluated regarding these equipments.

REFERENCES


5. Swider, Susan, M. et al. (1985), "Priorities reflected in the decisions of nursing students regarding a case of giving wrong dosage of medication": Nursing Research, 34, 2.


Attention Students

To commemorate SNA Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, it is planned to release a souvenir at the national level. Are you interested in bringing out your hidden talent? If yes, make use of this opportunity to publish your article/poem/fiction/anecdotes (in English or Hindi) on any topic in the souvenir. Send your contributions on or before May 15, 2004.

Secretary General

TNAI

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

In this world, there is nothing great, but man, in man, there is nothing great but his mind.

Rajendra School of Nursing

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Requires

Principal & Vice Principal: Qualifications: M.Sc. Nursing with 5 yrs. Experience or B.Sc. Nursing with 5 yrs experience. Tutor: B.Sc. Nursing/PHN Experience will be preferred. Salary Negotiable. Eligible candidates may apply immediately. Interview will be held at New Delhi.

Director