

Effect of Informational Booklet on Legal Responsibilities of Nursing Personnel in terms of Knowledge and Practice of Nursing Personnel

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Abstract

With enhancement in awareness levels of patients and the Right to Information Act in force, it is imperative for healthcare and medical personnel to have reasonable knowledge of legalities involved in care of the patients. The present study attempted to develop an information booklet on legal responsibilities of nursing personnel, assess the effect of such booklet before and after administration of booklet, and determine the acceptability of such booklet. It was an evaluative research study covering 50 staff nurses / nursing personnel from a Government hospital in Haryana. It is concluded that nurses had scant knowledge about legal issues associated with their job responsibilities and that the booklet was quite beneficial in upgrading their knowledge on legal matters and related issues as reflected in pre- and post-tests.

"A patient coming to the Hospital gives us an opportunity to serve. By treating the patient, we are not, doing a favour to him; in fact he is giving us an, Opportunity to serve."

"A hospital may be soundly organised, beautifully situated and well equipped. But if nursing care is not of high quality, the hospital will fail in its responsibilities."

Nurses are the second largest group of professionals working in the health care system. There has been a revolution in health care in the last 50 years due to advanced technologies and treatment options. Health care delivery system has grown up as an industry and health service consumers are better informed than in the past about their rights. With the advent of Consumer Protection Act of 1986, all professionals i.e. doctors, nurses etc. have come within the purview of the Act. The Right to Information (RTI) Act is very important tool in the hand of consumer to get information related to care records which reflect efficiency and sincerity of health personnel towards patients' lives. The impact of Consumer Act and RTI Act has been increasing responsibility and accountability on the part of all health professionals including nursing personnel.

Need for the study

The very first requirement in a hospital is that it should do the sick no harm, said Florence Nightingale in 1859.

In medical profession legal issues are increasing day by day. Most of the issues are related to the medication error, error in documentation, malprac-

tice and negligence and many more. These issues arise due to lack of knowledge or skills, lack of resources, shortage of staff, communication error, lack of therapeutic relationship, etc. As a nurse, it is important to have an understanding of the law and how it affects nursing practice.

Today's nurses must be aware of nursing standards, legal issues in nursing, legal limit of nursing and legal abilities etc. Many legal complications have been arising in the hospital which can be avoided by enhancing their knowledge and improvement in practice. Keeping this in mind it was decided to find out their current knowledge and practice regarding patient's legal rights, consent, patients' records, medication administration, Consumer Protection Act, legal terminologies and nursing responsibilities to avoid such issues and to provide information booklet for easy reference.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to : (i) develop an information booklet regarding legal responsibilities of nursing personnel; (ii) assess the knowledge and practice of nursing personnel before and after the administration of information booklet; (iii) determine the relationship between knowledge and practice of nursing personnel; and (iv) determine the acceptability and utility of the information booklet by nursing personnel on legal responsibilities.

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Hypothesis

H1: The mean post-test knowledge scores of nursing personnel regarding legal responsibilities after the administration of information booklet will be significantly higher than their mean pre-test knowledge scores as evident from the structured knowledge questionnaire at 0.05 level of significance.

H2: The mean post-test practice scores of nursing personnel regarding legal responsibilities after the administration of information booklet will be significantly higher than their mean pre-test practice scores as evident from observation checklist.

H3: There will be a significant relationship between post-test knowledge and post-test practice scores regarding legal responsibilities.

H4: There will be high acceptability and utility of information booklet for nursing personnel.

Conceptual Framework

According to Treece & Treece (1986) an important purpose of the conceptual framework is to communicate clearly the interrelationship of various concepts. The conceptual framework adopted for the present study is based on system model of self-learning material. The three phases of model are input, process and output.

Input refers to the target group with characteristics such as age, education, experience, etc. It also refers to the learning needs and interest entrance in the booklet programme. Target group is the nursing personnel of selected Government Hospital.

Process refers to the different operational procedures in the overall programme and development and production of the booklet, its dissemination and utilisation and assessment of its effectiveness.

Output refers to increase in the knowledge, practice and development of a more favourable attitude regarding legal responsibilities by the nursing personnel. Attitude of nursing personnel is not included in the present study.

Assumptions

(i) The Nursing personnel will have some knowledge regarding legal responsibilities; (ii) They will practice

some legal aspects in administration of medication, admission and discharge procedure and keeping patients records; (iii) Level of knowledge and practice regarding legal responsibilities of nurses can be measured by structured knowledge questionnaire and structured observation checklist; (iv) Information booklet will help in enhancing the knowledge of staff nurses; (v) The Nursing personnel will accept the information booklet; (vi) Level of acceptability and utility can be measured by structured opinionnaire.

Methodology

The approach used for this study was evaluative research type. One group pre-test post-test research design was used keeping in view the objectives of the study. Knowledge test as the measure K1 and observation checklist were used to measure the practice before administration of information booklet, expressed as OP1. The experimental variable 'X' was the informational booklet. The after measure was the second administration of the knowledge test for the measure K2, OP2 was second observation for practice after administration of information booklet.

OK1 represents the knowledge test before providing information booklet; OP1- Represents observation of practice before administration of information booklet; X - Represents the treatment with information booklet; OK2 - Represents knowledge test after providing the information booklet; and OP2 - Represents the observation of practice after providing information booklet. Schematic representation of procedure followed at day 1, day 3 and day 7 is at Table 1.

Variables: The independent variable was the information booklet on legal responsibilities of nursing personnel and dependent variables were the scores of knowledge test and opinionnaire for the acceptability and utility of information booklet.

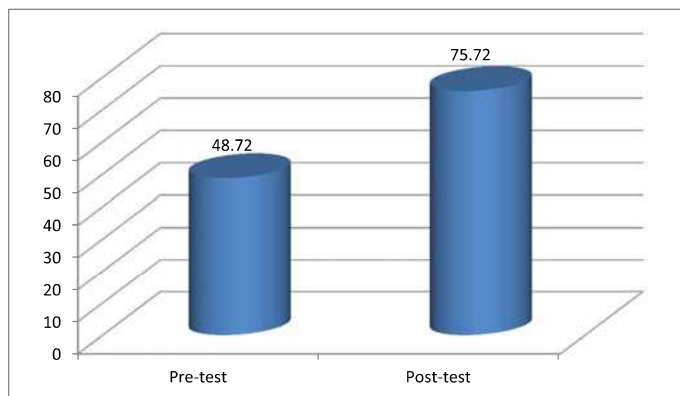
Sample and sampling technique: Total sample size for the present study was 50 Nursing personnel from selected Government Hospital, Haryana. Simple random sampling technique was adopted for the present study.

Table 1: Schematic representation

Group	Day - 1		Day - 3	Day - 7
	Pre - Test	Treatment		Post- Test
Nursing personnel working in selected Government hospital	Knowledge through questionnaire and practice through 1 st observation checklist	Introduction of information booklet on legal responsibilities of nursing personnel	Clarification of doubts of nursing personnel by researcher in the booklet.	Knowledge through questionnaire and practice through 2 nd observation checklist

Criteria for selecting the sample: The sample included the nursing personnel who would be available during

Fig 1: Comparison of mean pre- and post-test knowledge scores (%)



data collection, willing to participate in the study, and who could read and understand English.

Preparation of information booklet: The steps taken in development of the information booklet were: (i) Development of criteria rating scale, and (ii) Preparation of information booklet.

Content validity of information booklet: The content outline of information booklet consisted of: (i) Informed consent, (ii) Confidentiality, (iii) Standard of care, (iv) Patient rights & Nurses rights, (v) Admission of patient, (vi) Principle of correct administration of medication, (vii) Death and dying, (viii) Consumer protection Act, (ix) Documentation of nursing activity, (x) Strategies for prevention of legal problems in nursing practice, (xi) Nurses responsibilities, and (xii) Glossary.

Based on conceptual framework and objective of the study, the following tool were developed to obtain required information (Table 2). Tool designed consists of four sections:

Section-I: Demographic data including age, professional qualification, experience, in-service education etc.

Table 2: Tools used for study

Tool	Technique	Purpose
Questionnaire	Paper and pencil	To assess the knowledge
Observation checklist	Observation	To assess the practice
Opinionnaire		To determine acceptability and utility of information book booklet

Table 3: Mean, Median, and SD of pre-test & post-test knowledge score of nursing personnel (n=50)

Knowledge Test	Range of obtained score	Mean	Median	SD
Pre-test	10-29	24.36	25	3.92
Post-test	30-48	37.86	37	3.13

Section-II: Structured knowledge questionnaire comprised 50 items.

Section-III: An observation checklist for assessing the practice with 25 statements.

Section IV: Opinionnaire including 10 statements to assess the acceptability and utility of information booklet.

Data collection procedure: Administrative approval was taken. Willingness to participate in the study was taken. A pilot study was conducted among 15 nursing personnel and the study was found feasible. In the actual study, 50 nursing personnel were included after taking written approval. Questionnaire, observation checklist, opinionnaire was used according to schematic design to collect the information.

Results

- Out of 50 samples 20 (40%) of the samples were in the age group 21-30 years.
- Majority 46 (92%) of the sample's professional education was GNM.
- Maximum 37 (74%) had working experience of more than 10 years
- Majority i.e. 45 (90%) had not attended in-service programme related to legal aspects.
- All nursing personnel were registered.

Section 1: Findings related to knowledge score:

The mean pre-test knowledge score was 24.36 with a median 25 and SD 3.92 . The mean post test knowledge score was 37.86 with a median of 37 and SD 3.13 (Table 3). The f value of 22.43 at 0.05 level of significance, suggesting the effectiveness of information booklet in increasing the knowledge.

The mean percentage of pre-test and post-test knowledge scores depicted in the cylindrical graph shows the gain in knowledge of nursing personnel regarding the legal responsibilities (Fig 1).

The mean percentage scores was computed by first dividing the pre-test post-test knowledge scores, by the maximum possible scores (50) and multiplying the ratio by 100. The difference between the mean post-test percentage scores and mean pre-test percentage scores indicates the mean percentage gain in scores.

Thus, the knowledge gain scores indicate the effectiveness of information booklet

Section 2: Findings related to practice scores

The mean practice score was 11.22 with a median

Table 4: Coefficient showing relationship between post-test knowledge and post-test practice scores

Variables	Mean	SD	r
Post-test Knowledge Scores	37.82	1.59	0.61*
Post-test Practice Scores	19.08	1.41	

r. (48) = 0.273, p<0.05

* Significant at 0.05 level

11 and SD 1.80 against the maximum score of 25. The mean post-test practice score is 19.08 with a median of 20 and SD of 1.41 against a maximum score of 25 (Table 4). The maximum practice deficit existed in the area of documentation of nursing activity with a mean score of 1.82 followed by discharge of patient (1.90), admission of patient [1.96] and administration of medication (5.48).

Table 5: Area-wise Mean, Mean Percentage and Mean Percentage gain of Pre-test and Post-test Practice Score

Content	Maximum Score	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean % gain
		Mean score	Mean % score	Mean score	Mean % score	
Administration of medication	12	5.48	45.6	7.74	64.5	18.9
Admission of patient	4	1.96	49.0	2.92	73.0	24.0
Discharge of patient	4	1.90	47.5	2.90	72.5	25.0
Documentation of nursing activities	5	1.82	35.6	3.72	74.4	38.8

The data presented in Table 5 and Fig 2 indicates that the lowest pre-test mean score was in the area of documentation of nursing activities (1.82). It represents that the maximum practice deficit existed in this area followed by discharge of the patient (1.9) admission of the patient (1.96) and then administration of the medication (5.48). The data further indicates that the post-test mean practice score in all the areas were higher than the pre-test mean practice score. The maximum mean % gain was in the area of documentation of nursing activities (38.8) followed by discharge of the patients (25), admission of the patient (24) and administration of medication (18.9).

Correlation between post test knowledge and post-test practice scores

The coefficient correlation value (0.61) between post-test knowledge and post-test practice scores indicating that there was a significant positive relationship between knowledge and practice at 0.05 levels suggesting the effectiveness of information

Section 3: Findings related to acceptability and utility of information booklet

Table 6: Mean, Mode and SD of Acceptability and Utility Scores of Information Booklet (n=50)

Group	Range of obtained score	Mean	Mode	SD
Staff Nurses	22-30	27.28	26	1.47

The mean scores of nursing personnel on the opinionnaire for acceptability and utility of information booklet was 27.28 out of 30, which indicates high level of acceptance of information booklet by nursing personnel (Table 6). The percentage of responses of nursing personnel is shown in Fig 3.

Implications

1. Nursing Practice

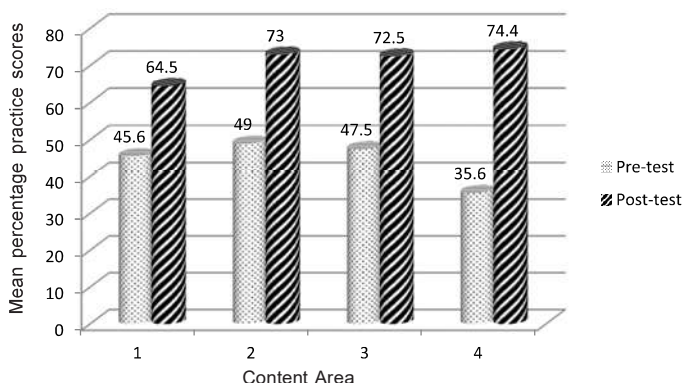
- Knowledge of legal responsibilities and legal aspects in nursing is absolutely essential for each nurse to safeguard self and clients from legal problems.
- Among many legal issues in nursing are the duty to report or seek medical care for a patient, protection of the patient's confidentiality and right to privacy, defamation of character, privileged information, issues related to informed consent, medication administration, documentation and issues related to different types of emergency care.

Nurses can do many things to prevent legal issues.

2. Nursing Education

- The consumer today demands quality care. Every professional is responsible to meet the need of consumers. Nursing curricula should equip students with knowledge on legal responsibilities include chapter on legal aspects to prepare good nurses for future.

Fig 2: Comparison between mean of pre- and post-test practice score (%)



- Practicing nurses should be updated in their knowledge through short courses regarding any changes in the law. Continuing education should be provided in this area.

3. Nursing Administration

- Nurses should be able to render service according to the changing needs of the society. In the context of technological and knowledge explosion, nurse administrators should take the responsibilities to update the knowledge and practice of nursing personnel to move along with the changes.

4. Nursing Research

- As few studies exist on legal aspects, there is need to conduct more studies in the field on various legal aspects.
- More studies especially in the Indian context will help identifying the problems as well as providing information on the magnitude and impact of health policies and procedures in nursing practice.

Recommendations

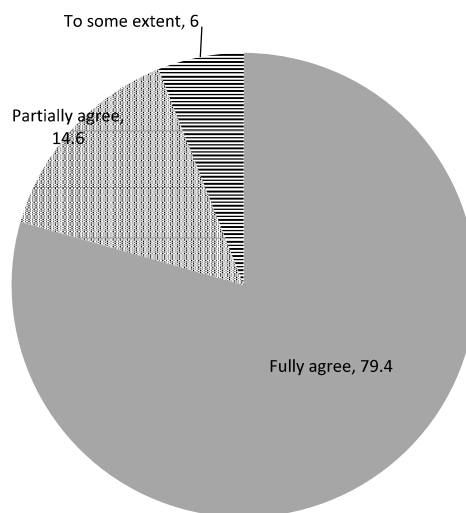
Similar study can be replicated on larger samples, different hospitals and in community settings. A comparative study by using two group designs on legal responsibilities. A follow-up study can be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of information booklet in retention of knowledge and practice. The information booklet can be updated from time to time. Also, professional bodies should review and periodically check the standard and facility for nursing practice.

Conclusion

The study shows that:

1. There was a deficiency of knowledge and practice among nursing personnel regarding legal responsibilities of nurses.
2. The information booklet was found to be effective

Fig 3: Responses of nursing personnel on acceptability of booklet



in enhancing the knowledge and practice of nursing personnel regarding legal responsibilities.

3. There was a highly positive significant relationship between post-test knowledge score and post-test practice score of nursing personnel

4. The information booklet on legal responsibilities of nursing personnel had high acceptability and utility among nursing personnel.

Limitations

The study was confined to (i) one group of 50 nursing personnel in one Govt Hospital, thus posing restriction to make broad generalisations; (ii) nursing personnel who were directly involved in bed side nursing, available and willing to take part in study; (iii) knowledge and practice being measured only twice. Also, the tool used for knowledge scores was structured, thus free response were restricted.

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