

CARE OF MENTALLY ILL PATIENTS

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Introduction

The super-structure of clinical psychiatry has expanded and strengthened into various behavioral sciences and social services, such as Neurophysiology, Neuropharmacology, Psychology and Sociology. These sciences are to be incorporated into the existing theoretical and therapeutic knowledge in psychiatry. The nursing of psychiatric patients requires warmth, concern, empathy along with an ability to withstand and attempt primitive feeling and bizarre behaviour in others. Nurses working in Psychiatric setting must know the meaning of behaviour as well as the intellectual and inter-personal capacity to promote healthier patterns of behaviour.

Classification in psychiatry

I. Mental retardation

(a) Border line, (b) Mild, (c) Moderate, (d) Severe, (e) Profound, (f) Unspecified.

II. Organic brain syndrome

(a) Psychosis. (b) Alcoholic psychosis. (c) Psychosis associated with intracranial infection. (d) Psychosis associated with other cerebral conditions. (e) Psychosis associated with physical conditions.

III. Psychosis not attributed to physical conditions

(a) Schizophrenia. (b) Major affective disorders like manic depressive illness. (c) Paranoid state, etc.

IV. Neurosis

V. Personality disorders. Such as hysterical sexual deviation, alcoholism, etc..

Psychiatric team

In a hospital a psychiatric team includes senior psychiatrist, psychiatrist, psychiatric social worker, psychologist, nursing personnel, occupational therapist, dietician and other nursing aides. In a mental health institute such programmes are conducted in the welfare of the patients from time to time where the cooperation of all the officers is needed in order to co-ordinate the activities to make the project successful. It is important that the nurse working in a mental health insti-

tute provides a therapeutic environment in order to make the programme successful.

Training

The need to orient employees and to provide job information and training has been well recognised through training activities while old talents may be updated and new ones developed. Hospital authorities and personnel staff members should be alert to indications of employee training needs. Training represents a positive approach to the improvement of performance. Likewise in mental health institutions where we are scarce of psychiatric nurses, the in-service programme should be considered as vital activity of the organisation set up.

Role of psychiatric nurse.

Management of mentally ill patients. The important role of a psychiatric nurse is the management of the environment of the patients in which they react. Since the nurse spends more time than do other mental health professionals with the patient, she is in a good position to help produce a therapeutic environment that provides the patient with opportunities to learn more effective ways of living.

In a therapeutic environment, patients are encouraged to express their conflicts, attempt to understand them, and experiment with new ways to deal with their problems such as taking them out for a walk in the open grounds morning and evening, group psychotherapy and forming welfare committees of the patients. A psychiatric nurse plays an important role in improving the personal habits of the patients like bathing, oral hygiene, toilet habits, dressing habits, making queries while distribution of food and medicine, through personal contact with patients as they act out their difficulties. Nurses can effect significant changes by helping patients to become aware of their patterns of inter-action and by providing inter-personal opportunities to try out new patterns.

Nurses should help patients to use time for leisure and work such as gardening, making their own beds, keeping the surroundings clean, assistance in kitchen, taking part in other activities like needle work, handicraft, helping patients to organise variety entertainment programmes from time to time

Observations

A psychiatric nurse assists doctor in diagnosing the patients by observing the vital changes in his behaviour which will ultimately be a guide to psychiatrist to establish the line of treatment, for example, mannerisms such as knocking one's forehead, pulling out hairs, rubbing various parts of the body, etc. A patient may lie down quietly in his bed, eyes wide open during the night. In this situation, the nurse has to make definite observations by keeping herself active and report to doctor to prescribe the necessary treatment.

Here is another example, a patient admitted with the complaints of being malign, bizarre, hostile and non-cooperative. After two/three days' treatment, there is a big improvement in the behaviour of the patient. Now the nurse being an active observant, makes a record in the improvement of his behaviour for information of the doctor to further adjust the treatment accordingly. The nurse while working in a psychiatric ward should always be taking more interest and be optimistic in approach.

Many a time the patient is sent from Court for observations. The nurse has to make certain important observations by spending much time with her patients. While making observations, she should check her signs with more experienced nurses and with psychiatrist on service. Some of the important symptoms can be noted like anxiety, obsessions, compulsions and depression.

Lastly, the young psychiatric nurse should take advantage of every opportunity to go on ward rounds with the psychiatrists, to be present at psychiatric examination of the patients, and to attend demonstrations.

Medicines

Medicines to mentally ill patients must be administered exactly in accordance with the prescription. Any change in behaviour must be brought to the knowledge of a psychiatrist in order to further adjust the medicine. Sleep for mentally ill patients has a vital role to play in the recovery of their ill mental health. The role of a psychiatric nurse is to see that the patient gets sleep with proper dose of medicine in consultation with the psychiatrist.

Family therapy

Family therapy is another important direct care of psychiatric nurses. Nurses deal with the family members of hospitalised patients. They assist the family members to understand the psychiatric needs of the patients and explain them the importance of regular check up. As in group therapy, nurses conduct family therapy in a co-therapist situation or alone.

Counselling

Another major role of a psychiatric nurse is to help patients to communicate more clearly.

Rehabilitation

Psychiatric nurse plays an important role in rehabilitation of a patient by explaining the importance of regular check up and in the hospital by showing to the psychiatrist also after the patient is discharged from the hospital, the patient should be advised to use medicines regularly.

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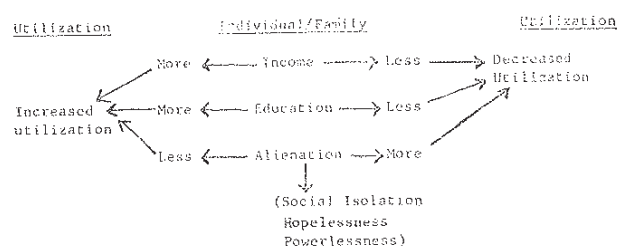


Figure 2: Conceptual Model on Utilization of Preventive Health Services³

Do you find any relationships between utilization of Preventive Health Services and individual or family background? Can you identify the nature of the relationships that are direct or inverse?

To summarize, we have discussed how theory building occurs through the acquisition of knowledge and through the use of scientific methods. Theory also develops when relationships among variables are examined in order to predict newer relationships.

In our next letter, we will begin a discussion of the types of statistics you will be using in order to analyze your data.

References

G. A. Beauchamp, *Curriculum Theory* Illinois: The Kagg Press, 1968, p. 19.

²Fred K. Kerlinger, *Foundations of Behavioral Research*, N.Y.: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc. 1973 pp. 4-8.

³Bonnie Bullough "Poverty, Ethnic Identity and Preventive Health Care" *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* (13 December, 1972), 347-59.