



KNOWLEDGE ON LEGAL ASPECTS IN PATIENT CARE AMONG STAFF NURSES

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*Corresponding Author**ABSTRACT**

Nurses encounter many legal issues surrounding these sensitive areas. The purpose of the study is to assess the knowledge on legal aspects in patient care among staff nurses". The objectives of the study were to assess the knowledge of staff nurses on legal aspects in patient care and to determine the association of knowledge on legal aspects in patient care with the selected socio personal variables. The quantitative research approach and descriptive research design were used for the study. 110 staff nurses were selected using non probability convenience sampling technique. The data was collected by using semi structured knowledge questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results of the study revealed that majority (92.7%) of the participants belongs to the age group 20-30 years, 94.5% were females, 74.5% were B.Sc nursing degree holders, 55.5% of them with 2-5years of clinical experience, 46.4% of them were practiced in general ward and 61.8% had source of information regarding legal aspects in patient care other than text books. The level of knowledge of staff nurses regarding legal aspects in patient care showed that majority (50%) had average knowledge and 44.5% had poor knowledge and 5.5% had good knowledge. There is no significant association between the knowledge on legal aspects in patient care among staff nurses and selected socio-personal variables like age, gender, marital status, professional qualification, years of clinical experience, area of clinical practice and previous information regarding legal aspects in patient care other than text books.

KEYWORDS : Knowledge, Legal Aspect, staff nurses**INTRODUCTION**

Nursing is an integral part of the health care system and nurse's direct energies towards the promotion, maintenance and restoration of health. Regardless of the health care setting, professional nurses are morally, ethically, and legally accountable for their nursing judgments and actions.¹ Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of their legal rights in health care. For the implementation of high quality of nursing practice in the world of latest medical technological advances a good knowledge of legal aspects of health care is necessity.²

Legal aspects include general law, legal issues and legal responsibilities.³ The law is the body of principles recognized and applied by the state and the administration of justice. The two types of laws are: public and civil laws. Public law governs the relationship between the individual and the state. Many consumer protection laws are of a public law nature. There are main three sources of public law; constitutional administrative and criminal.¹

Unintentional torts are accidents that cause injury to another person or property. It includes negligence and malpractice. Intentional torts are deliberate actions in which the intent is to cause injury to person or property. It includes assault battery, false imprisonment, intentional infliction of emotional distress and fraud. Quasi intentional tort usually involves situations of communication and often violates a person's reputation, personal privacy or civil rights.¹

Legal responsibilities of nurses are guided by constitutional laws, professional laws, institutional policies, rules and regulations, standing orders and precedents. The important safe guards in nursing practice are licensure or registration, standards of care, standing orders, informed consent, correct identity documentation, drug maintenance.² Among the hospitalized patients worldwide, 3-16% suffer injury as a result of medical intervention, the most common being the adverse effect of drugs.⁴

A recent Johns Hopkins study claims more than 250,000 people in the U.S. die every year from medical errors. Other reports claim the numbers to be as high as 440,000. Medical errors are the third-leading cause of death after heart disease and cancer.⁵ The errors that are being committed by the

nurses are increasing especially medication errors⁶.

Nursing profession of today's need to be competent in all dimensions. It is mandatory for every nurse to have sound knowledge on legal on health care and practice. Considering the above incidences there is a great need to conduct the study to assess the knowledge of staff nurses regarding legal aspects in patient care.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Quantitative research approach and descriptive research design were adopted for this study. In this study, the research variable is knowledge of staff nurses on legal aspects in patient care. The sample for the study consists of 110 staff nurses who are working at Sree Gokulam Medical College and research foundation, Venjaramood. Non probability convenience sampling technique was adopted to select the samples. The inclusion criteria includes staff nurses who are willing to participate in the study. The exclusion criteria includes staff nurses who are not present at the time of data collection.

The tool consists of socio personal proforma and semi structured knowledge questionnaire. The split- half method was used to test the reliability of the tool and it was tested using Spearman Brown prophesy formula. The 'r' value was 0.83 and the tool was found reliable for a new instrument.

To conduct research study in Sree Gokulam Medical College and Research Foundation, Venjaramoodu, formal permission was obtained from the hospital and the ethical committee of Sree Gokulam Nursing College. The investigators introduced themselves to the subjects, topic was explained to them and confidentiality was assured. An informed consent was taken from all subjects individually after explaining the objectives and purpose of study. After obtaining permission of the subject, socio personal proforma and structured knowledge questionnaire were administered and data were collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**Section A - Description Of Sample Characteristics**

Frequency and percentage was used to determine the distribution of samples according to the socio personal variables.

Distribution of samples according to the age shows that

among 110 samples majority (92.7%) were in the age group of 20-30 years of age, 7.3% belongs to 31-40 years of age and nobody was in the age group of above 40 years. Distribution of subjects according to gender shows that majority (94.5%) were females and remaining 5.5% were males.

According to marital status, the majority (62.7%) of the samples were married and 37.3% were unmarried. According to the professional qualification of the subjects majority (74.5%) were BSc nurses, 19.1% were GNM and 6.4% were PBBSC nurses. According to the years of clinical experience, majority (55.5%) of the subjects had 2-5 years, 33.6% had <2 years and 10.9% had above 5 years of clinical experience. According to area of practice, majority (46.4%) of the samples were belongs to ward, 35.5% belongs to ICU, 16.4% belongs to others and 1.7% belongs to OT. According to the previous information regarding legal aspects in patient care other than text books, majority (61.8%) of the samples had previous information and 38.2% had no previous information. According to source of information regarding legal aspects in patient care other than text books, majority (47.22%) of the samples has got information from magazines or journals, 23.61% had attended conference or workshop, 18.05% had self-experience regarding legal aspects in patient care, 6.95% has got information from mass media and 4.17% has got information from peer group

Section-b- Knowledge Of Staff Nurses Regarding Legal Aspects In Patient Care

The data was analysed in terms of frequency and percentage.

Table :1 Distribution Of Samples According To The Level Of Knowledge On Legal Aspects In Patient Care Among Staff Nurses (n=110)

Knowledge criteria	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Good knowledge	6	5.5
Average knowledge	55	50
Poor knowledge	49	44.5
Total	110	100

According to the level of knowledge on legal aspects in patient care among staff nurses, the data shows that majority (50%) had average knowledge, whereas 44.5% had poor knowledge and 5.5% had good knowledge.

This was supported by a cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted to assess the knowledge on legal and ethical aspects in patient care among staff nurses at Manipal. The results revealed that only 10% of nurses had good knowledge, 77% had average knowledge and 30% had poor knowledge. There was no significant association between level of knowledge and selected demographic variables.

Section C -association Between Knowledge On Legal Aspects In Patient Care Among Staff Nurses And Selected Socio-personal Variables

The data were analysed by chi square test

Table 2: Association Between Knowledge On Legal Aspects In Patient Care And Selected Socio- Personal Variables. (n=110)

Sl. No	Variables	Category	Knowledge			χ^2	df	P value
			Good	Average	Poor			
1	Age	20-30 yrs	6	49	47	2.	2	0.318
		31-40 yrs	0	6	2	289		
2	gender	Male	0	2	4	1.	2	0.498
		Female	6	53	45	396		
3	Marital status	Unmarried	4	20	17	2.37	2	0.305
		Married	2	35	32			
4	Professional qualification	GNM	2	10	9	1.45	4	0.834
		B.Sc	4	42	36			
		PBBSc	0	3	4			

5	Year of clinical experience	<2 yrs	1	17	19	5.12	4	0.275
		2-5 yrs	5	29	27			
		>5 yrs	0	9	3			
6	Area of clinical practice	ICU	3	24	12	7.31	6	0.292
		Ward	3	24	24			
		OT	0	1	1			
		Others	0	6	12			
7	Source of information regarding legal aspects in patient care other than text books	Yes	3	31	34	2.23	2	0.327
		No	3	24	15			

Data presented in the table 2 shows that, all the chi square values are less than that of table value at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the researcher accepted the null hypothesis (H₀) and rejected the research hypothesis (H₁). Thus it is concluded that there is no significance association between knowledge of staff nurses regarding legal aspects in patient care and the socio-personal variables like age, gender, marital status, professional qualification, years of clinical experience, area of clinical practice and source of information other than textbooks.

This was supported by a cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted to assess the knowledge on legal and ethical aspects in patient care among staff nurses at Manipal. 230 staff nurses working in critical care unit were included in the study. The result revealed that only 10% of nurses had good knowledge, 77% had average knowledge and 30% had poor knowledge. There was no significant association between level of knowledge and selected demographic variables.

CONCLUSION

The study findings revealed that majority (50%) had average knowledge, 44.5% had poor knowledge and 5.5% had good knowledge on legal aspects in patient care. So it is important for the nurse to aware about the legal aspects in patient care and it would result in delivery of safe and competent care to the client.

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