A COMPARATIVE RESEARCH STUDY TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS AND PATIENT CARE ISSUES AMONG NURSES OF CRITICAL CARE UNITS AND NURSES OF GENERAL WARDS OF IGMCH, SHIMLA

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Abstract

Nursing practice is endowed by many ethical and legal aspects because nurses are accountable for their professional judgments and action. Earlier the professional nursing practice, nurses' work had no recognition and the profession had no separate identity. But over the time, the scope of nursing practice has expanded, technologies have advanced, and nurses are going for higher levels of education. With these changes, there was a change in the manner in which the standard of care given by nurses was viewed, and with expanded body of knowledge and expertise; this profession got an international identity. With the growth of this profession, responsibilities of nurses have also increased not just in the usage of advanced technology but also in the manner in which nursing care is delivered.[1] In above perspective, we conducted a comparative research study regarding awareness of laws and ethics between nurses of critical care units and nurses of general wards to assess which section of nurses requires to work on the enhancement of their knowledge about laws and ethics. Aim of the study is to compare the level of knowledge about ethical implications and patient care issues between nurses of critical care units and nurses of general ward. The tool (self-administered structured questionnaire) was developed and utilized for data collection. Data analysis was done by using descriptive and inferential methods on SPSS. The study findings showed that knowledge of nurses in critical care wards (group A) about ethical implications and patient care issues was - 23(76%) had average knowledge, 2(6.7%) had good knowledge whereas 5 (16.7%) had below average knowledge. Whereas knowledge of nurses of general wards (group B) was- no subject i.e., 0(0%) had good knowledge, 26(86.7) had average knowledge and 4(13.3%) had below average knowledge. Group A mean knowledge score was 13.03 with standard deviation of 3.409 whereas group B mean score was 12.67 with standard deviation of 3.527. Nurses are expected to provide a care which is ethically and legally safer thus it is imperative to enhance knowledge of nurses regarding ethical implications and patient care issues.

Keywords: Nurse, IGMCH

INTRODUCTION

The legal and ethical aspects of nursing have an impact on the manner of care which is delivered to patients by nurses. Legal and ethical concerns shape up the environment in which nursing is practiced. Central and state laws also impact the manner in which nursing is practiced. Due to the potential for civil and criminal liabilities in regard to health care, nurses should be familiar with key statutes and regulations regarding the delivery of patient care.

In order to avoid liability and guard against negligence or malpractice suits, the nurse must be

aware of the legal responsibilities of each and every aspect of the nursing role. Primary goals of professional accountability in nursing care are to maintain high standards of care and to prevent the patients from harm.

Nurses in India have been in the limelight for negligence and cases of criminal medical negligence against nurses are also being registered in courts. More and more nurses are being named defendants in malpractice lawsuits. An article published in AJN, American Journal of Nursing by Croke, Eileen M. EdD, ANP, LNC-C had mentioned that according to the National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB), from 1995 to 2001, the number of malpractice payments made by nurses increased from 253 to 413.[2]

The rising demands and knowledge of health care consumers warrants a corresponding increase in the legal and ethical responsibilities of nurses. This implies that nurses require being vigilant about understanding of the law. Nursing practice is surrounded by many legal aspects because nurses are accountable for their professional judgments and action. For the implementation of high quality of nursing practice in the world of latest medical technologies, a good knowledge of legal aspects of health care is inevitable. Knowledge of legal aspects in nursing is absolutely essential for each nurse to safeguard self and patients from legal bindings.[3]

PROBLEM STATEMENT
A comparative study to assess the knowledge about ethical implications and patient care issues among nurses working in critical care units and general wards of IGMCH, Shimla

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY
1. To assess the knowledge of nurses about ethical implications and patient care issues among nurses.
2. To compare the level of knowledge ethical implications and patient care issues among nurses working in critical care units and general wards of IGMCH, Shimla
3. To determine

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS
Ethical implications: it refers to the code of ethics that provide the framework for informed consent, malpractice, assault, battery and documentation, patient's rights and many other aspects like LAMA.
Patient care issues - In this study it means all the laws, rules and regulations followed by nurses while providing her services to the patients.
Knowledge: According to Oxford dictionary, knowledge means all that is known, information. In this study it refers to the knowledge of nurses regarding ethical implications and patient care issues
Nurse: a nurse who has graduated from a course in nursing and is licensed to practice the profession. In this study it refers to all the nurses, who are directly involved in the delivery of nursing care in selected wards of Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital Shimla, H.P
Assumptions – It is assumed that nurses working in critical care units have more knowledge about ethical implications and patient care issues than nurses working in general wards.
Delimitation- The study was limited to the registered nurses working in selected wards of Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital, Shimla, H.P.

METHODS

Research Approach- quantitative research approach was used.

Research Design- comparative research design was used

Setting of the research study- the setting of the present research study was IGMCH, Shimla, H.P.

Variables under the study-

Research variable- research variable is knowledge about ethical implications and patient care issues.

Demographic variable- age, professional qualifications, clinical experience, working area.

Target population- the target population for the present study was nurses of IGMCH, Shimla, H.P.

SAMPLE CRITERIA

Inclusion criteria- nurses who were working in IGMCH, Shimla and were willing to be the participant of research.

Exclusion criteria- the nurses who were not working in IGMCH, Shimla and who were not willing to be the part of research study and those who were not available at the time of data collection.

Sample size and Sampling technique- sample size for the present research study was 120. In which 60 were in group A (nurses who were working in critical care unit) and 60 were in Group B (nurses who were working in general wards). Sampling technique was convenient sampling technique was used.

Development of research data collection tool- Socio demographic questions were used to collect data. Structured knowledge questionnaire was developed to assess knowledge regarding medico-legal aspects in nursing among registered nurses of IGMC and Hospital, Shimla (H.P)

Description of tool- Tool was divided into two sections:

Section A

It consisted of items on demographic variables including age, educational status, clinical work experience, source of previous knowledge regarding medico-legal aspects in nursing and area of working.

Section B

Structured knowledge questionnaire regarding ethical implications and patient care issues consisted of 29 knowledge items. First 8 questions were about knowledge recalling regarding medico legal aspects in nursing", 9-20 questions were about "knowledge apprehension of medico-legal aspects in nursing" and 21-29 questions were about "knowledge application regarding medico-legal aspects in nursing".

SCORING

One mark is given for each correct answer and zero for incorrect answer. The maximum score is 29 and minimum score is zero. To interpret knowledge of registered nurses, this was distributed as follows:

Sr. No.	Score	Level of knowledge
1.	0-9	Below Average
2.	10-19	Average
3.	20-29	Good

RESULTS

Objective 1: To assess the knowledge of nurses regarding ethical implications and patient care issues among nurses of IGMCH, Shimla.

Frequency and percentage distribution of subjects as per level of knowledge Scores among experimental and control group
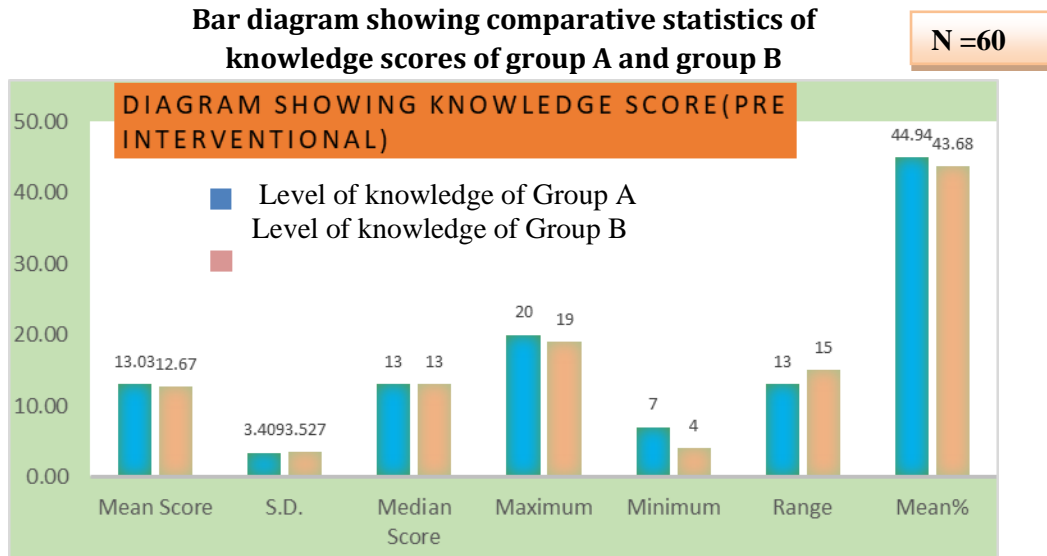
CRITERIA MEASURE OF KNOWLEDGE SCORE		N = 60
Category Score	**Group A (n=30)**	**Group B (n = 30)**
Good(20-29)	2(6.7%)	0(0%)
Average (10-19)	23(76.7%)	26(86.7%)
Below Average (0-9)	5(16.7%)	4(13.3%)
Maximum=29 Minimum = 0		

Table depicts that in group A majority of the subjects i.e., 23(76%) had average knowledge, 2(6.7%) had good knowledge whereas 5 (16.7%) had below average knowledge.

In group B no subject i.e., 0(0%) had good knowledge, 26(86.7) had average knowledge and 4(13.3%) had below average knowledge regarding ethical implications and patient care issues.

Objective 2- to compare the knowledge regarding ethical implications and patient care issues between Group A (nurses of critical care wards) and Group B (nurses of general wards).

Bar diagram showing comparative statistics of knowledge scores of group A and group B

This Figure depicts that in Group A mean knowledge score was 13.03 with standard deviation of 3.409 whereas in Group B mean score was 12.67 with standard deviation of 3.527.

Maximum score obtained in Group A was 20 and in Group B was 19. Minimum knowledge score in Group A was 7 and in Group B, it was 4.

In Group A median score found to be 20, range was 13 and mean percentage was 44.94. In Group B median score, range and mean percentage were 13, 15 and 43.68 respectively.

DISCUSSION

Discussion of the findings of this study has been done in accordance with sections of the analysis and interpretations of the major findings of the present study with other similar studies conducted in different settings.

Section I

Findings related to socio demographic variables of nurses of Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital, Shimla H.P

In the present study the following socio-demographic variables are taken:

- Age (in years)
- Professional qualification
- Clinical work experience
- Source of prior knowledge
- Working area

Similar study was conducted by **Mr. Arun Saju , Prof Nirmal Jose A (2018)** to assess the knowledge regarding legal aspects in patient care among staff nurses at kerela.

The demographic profile of samples was described in terms of –

- Age
- Gender
- Educational status
- Total years of working experience
- Area of work
- Previous exposure on information regarding legal aspects of patient care and legal problems faced by self as a nurse.

Section-II

Findings related to knowledge regarding ethical implications and patient care issues among nurses of critical care units (group A) and nurses of general wards (group B)

In the present study, it was found that in Group A i.e., nurses of critical care units most of the subjects i.e., 23(76%) had average knowledge regarding ethical implications and patient care issues, 2(6.7%) had good knowledge whereas 5 (16.7%) had below average knowledge. In Group B (nurses of general ward) no subject i.e., 0(0%) had good knowledge, 26(86.7) had average knowledge and 4(13.3%) had below average knowledge.

The study conducted by **Prof. Dr. Sheela Shenai N A, Jisha Joseph, Anu Jacob Kachappillil (2018)** demonstrated that majority (84%) of the nurses had average knowledge, 3% had good knowledge and only 13% had poor knowledge on legal aspects of patient care. These findings are almost similar to the present study indicating that there is need to enhance the knowledge of registered nurses regarding medico-legal aspects in nursing.[4]

Findings related to comparison of level of knowledge regarding ethical implications and patient care issues between nurses of critical care units (group A) and nurses of general wards (group B)

In present study, Group A mean knowledge score was 13.03 with standard deviation of 3.409 whereas in control group mean score was 12.67 with standard deviation of 3.527.

Maximum score obtained in Group A was 20 and in Group B was 19. Minimum knowledge score in Group A was 7 and in Group B, it was 4.

In Group A median score found to be 20, range was 13 and mean percentage was 44.94. In Group B median score, range and mean percentage were 13, 15 and 43.68 respectively.

Thus, it is found that knowledge regarding ethical implications and patient care issues is higher in nurses work in critical care units and nurses working in general wards.

LIMITATIONS

Study was time bound.
Study was confined to small number of nurses.
Study was limited to I.G.M.C. and Hospital, Shimla.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that nurses working in critical care units are more knowledgeable than nurses of general wards regarding ethical implications and patient care issues. It may be due to frequency of encountering issues, nurse patient ratio, nurse of critical care units have to face end-of-life treatment issues, critical patient care issues, and human rights issues, family care issue and many more. Nurses are expected to provide a care which is ethically and legally safer thus it is imperative to enhance knowledge of nurses regarding ethical implications and patient care issues. Hence regular in-service/ refresher course / Specialized Diploma courses related to ethical implications and patient care issues should be implemented.

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