

Hospital Nurse Knowledge of and Approach to Dementia Care

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ABSTRACT

Background: The U.K. Department of Health recently proposed an international dementia strategy to enhance the quality of dementia care in acute hospital care settings. To implement such a strategy, it is necessary to first assess whether nurses have the knowledge and person-centered approach essential to enhancing hospital-based dementia care quality.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to evaluate hospital nurse knowledge of and approach toward dementia care and to explore the relationship between nurse demographic characteristics and these two issues.

Methods: We distributed a 16-item questionnaire on dementia care knowledge to 124 nurses at a teaching hospital in southern Taiwan. We also distributed to the same participants a 13-item questionnaire designed to assess the approach, either reality oriented or person centered, of participants in providing care to advanced dementia patients.

Results: The total mean score for participant dementia care knowledge was 10.8 ($SD = 2.0$). Results indicated that most nurses confused dementia with delirium. The advanced dementia care questionnaire suggested care tended to be reality oriented. Licensed registered nurses with more working experience had higher dementia care knowledge scores. Age and working experience both negatively correlated with a reality-oriented approach toward care.

Conclusions/Implications for Practice: Most participants had accurate dementia care knowledge and tended to use a reality-oriented approach. Nurse competency in differentiating delirium from dementia should be enhanced. This study provided initial insight into the dementia care situation at a single hospital in southern Taiwan. Future studies should further explore the relationship between dementia care quality and hospital nurses' knowledge and approaches, respectively.

KEY WORDS:

dementia, hospital, knowledge, delirium, person-centered approach.

Introduction

Increases in the number of patients with dementia and dementia care have become important community and clinical care issues in many countries (Wimo, Winblad, & Jönsson, 2010). The prevalence of dementia in Taiwan has increased yearly. In 2007, 10.2% of Taiwanese over the age of 65 years had dementia (Fuh & Wang, 2008). When people with dementia are admitted to hospitals for the treatment of other physical complications such as pneumonia and fractures, hospital nurses become primary short-term care providers. Providing appropriate short-term hospital nursing care, enhancing care quality, and maintaining inpatient dignity are important issues faced in managing dementia patients (Leung & Todd, 2010; Woolley, Young, Green, & Brooker, 2008).

Recently proposed approaches to enhancing acute care dementia care quality include the U.K. Department of Health's (2009) national dementia strategy; Leung and Todd's (2010) recommendations on hospital physical environment and design changes, staff knowledge and skills training, and person-centered care; and other proposals on enhancing person-centered care in the Netherlands (van de Ven et al., 2012) and Sweden (Edvardsson, Fetherstonhaugh, & Nay, 2010).

Cowdell (2010) found that nurses in acute care hospitals in the United Kingdom did not achieve national dementia strategy goals despite attempting to provide good care to dementia patients. Surveyed nursing staff believed that they had inadequate training and few opportunities to practice new dementia care knowledge. Therefore, these

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