

Leadership Connection 2018 (15-18 September)

Competence in Caring for Patients With Opioid Addiction: A Phenomenological Approach

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In 2016, more than 42,000 people in the United States lost their lives to opioid overdose and 40% of those deaths were from prescription opioids (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2017). As the opioid epidemic has continued to rise, cities such as Baltimore are facing an increasing number of opioid-related deaths each year. Healthcare facilities are seeing an increased number of admissions due to opioid complications, withdrawal, and overdose. This presents an urgent need for nurses and nursing students to be able to care for those addicted to opioids in a caring and compassionate way.

The aim of this study was to gain insight on the phenomena of caring for those facing opioid addiction in an acute care setting. The study was conducted using a phenomenological and qualitative comprehensive interview method. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with two neonatal intensive care unit nurses, four hospitalized patients struggling with addiction, four nursing students, and a member of the Screening Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) team. Exploring the phenomenon of being cared for and providing care to was theoretically influenced by the works of Jean Watson, Milton Mayeroff, and Dr. David Moller. Themes of being treated differently, not regarded as a person, lack of respect, and vulnerability emerged through the data analysis. New understandings on how healthcare providers, including nursing students, gain competence in caring for persons with addiction. Based on the findings, it is evident that nurse educators have an opportunity to influence the experience of caring for this vulnerable population. Self-reflection, critical conversations, role-play, and simulation are all evidenced based activities that can be incorporated into nursing programs to enhance both the student and patient experiences. Additionally, acute care facilities should provide novice nurses with training emphasizing the delivery of compassionate and empathetic care for patients with addiction.

Title:

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Keywords:

Addiction, Caring and Opioid epidemic

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Abstract Summary:

There is an increasing number of hospital admissions of patients living with the disease of opioid addiction. Building competency amongst nursing students and novice nurses is one step towards increasing the quality of care to these patients.

Content Outline:

Competence in Caring for Patients with Opioid Addiction: A Phenomenological Approach

Introduction A. Opioids include heroin and prescription opioid drugs such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, methadone, tramadol, codeine, and fentanyl. B. In 2016, more than 42,000 people in the United States lost their lives to opioid overdose and 40% of those deaths were from prescription opioids. C. The rate of emergency room visits in Maryland was 288 per 100,000 residents, exceeding the national average of almost 178 per 100,000 residents. D. The purpose of this presentation is to explore the phenomenon of being cared for through the voices of ones who are hospitalized and suffer from addiction. Themes that emerged after interviewing patients living with the disease of addiction A. Theme of being treated differently 1. Not being informed of plan of care 2. Lack of empathetic care received 3. Nurse standing in the hall instead of coming inside of the room B. Theme of not regarded as a person 1. Room untidy (dirty linens, trash overflow, not offered to shower or brush teeth daily) 2. Nurse not talking or introducing themselves 3. Lack of rapport between the nurse and the patient C. Theme of lack of respect 1. Being spoken to in an unkind tone 2. Not being trusted 3. Care influenced by stigma surrounding people with opioid addiction D. Theme of vulnerability 1. Healthcare providers' lack of understanding/education about addiction 2. Untreated mental illness 3. Lack of financial support 4. Feeling of loneliness and hopelessness What is the meaning of caring for patients living with the disease of addiction including babies who are born addicted to drugs? A. Interviews with NICU nurses 1. Nurses felt anger towards the mothers because these nurses have a very close encounter with the babies who are addicted to opioids 2. Nurses were compassionate and thought about their own loved ones who suffer from addiction 3. Nurses had a lack of trust towards the parents who were addicted to opioids B. Interviews with nursing students 1. Students expressed their lack of confidence and clinical experience with caring for patients with addiction 2. Students expressed their lack of knowledge about illicit drugs How to improve competency to novice nurses in acute care setting? 1. Offer mandatory learning courses to help remove the stigma that surrounds opioid addiction to improve patient outcomes 2. Conduct mock drills on signs and symptoms of opioid withdrawals and how to administer the drug Narcan in case of an opioid overdose. **How can nursing schools help to improve competency amongst nursing students?** 1. Virtue simulation to test students' knowledge using interactive situations and environments to imitate real-life circumstances 2. Self-reflection exercises to remove any biases that may hinder optimal care towards persons with the disease of addiction. 3. Role-play to enhance therapeutic communication and to implement the act of showing kindness and respect to patients with addiction Conclusion A. The purpose of this presentation is to explore the phenomenon of being cared for through the voices of ones who are hospitalized and suffer from addiction. B. Themes of being treated differently, not regarded as a person, and lack of respect will be evaluated through the voices of patients with opioid addiction as well as through the literature. C. Nurse educators can change curriculum to include simulation practices, self-reflection exercises, and role playing as a part of enhancing competency D. Removing any biases that may hinder optimal care towards persons with the disease of addiction.

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Author Summary: Natasha Maith has been working on a neurology/telemetry unit for six years running charge and precepting new graduate nurses. She works closely with patients living with the disease of addiction and aims to improve the quality of care given to this vulnerable population. She is passionate about encouraging nursing students and novice nurses to enhance their competency in caring for patients with addiction to promote positive health outcomes.