

Sigma's VIRTUAL 31st International Nursing Research Congress (Wednesday, 22 July - Friday, 24 July)

Ethical Dilemmas Encountered by Nursing Researchers in Japan

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Background:

Ethical dilemmas are conflicts of prioritization between two distinct ethical norms, which can hinder ethical behavior among nurse researchers. Therefore, it is essential to understand what ethical dilemmas are encountered by nurse researchers to prepare them to handle such dilemmas in a sound manner.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study was to clarify the ethical dilemmas nurse researchers encounter in Japan.

Methods:

We created a "questionnaire of ethical issues encountered when conducting research by nurse researchers". In addition, in order to confirm that data were collected from nurse researchers with diverse backgrounds, a "questionnaire regarding characteristics of nurses researchers" was prepared. The content validity of the questionnaire was ensured through expert meetings and pilot studies. A total of 2,111 questionnaires were distributed to nurse researchers. From the responses, we extracted the contents related to the ethical dilemmas in research that nurse researchers encountered and analyzed the data. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the Gunma Prefectural College of Health Sciences.

Results:

In total, 901 questionnaires were returned, among which valid data from 35 respondents with ethical dilemmas were included in the analysis. The subjects included 31 women (88.6%) and four men (11.4%), from 22 institutions (62.7%) and 10 hospitals (28.6%). The final academic background included nine doctors (25.8%) and 22 masters (62.7%). The main research methods included 28 qualitative studies (80.0%) and 26 quantitative studies (74.3%). Age and research area were varied. After qualitative and inductive analysis of the descriptions of 35 respondents, the following three categories were identified: (i) Dilemmas concerning the rights of subjects "knowing" and the confidentiality of researchers, (ii) Dilemmas concerning ensuring research participation by respecting the subjects' free will and the importance of research themes, and (iii) Dilemmas concerning the avoidance of burden caused by the participation of subjects in research and the importance of the research themes.

Discussion:

Of these three categories, category (i) comprised dilemmas between ethical principles, the prioritization of which must be determined according to the situation. Categories (ii) and (iii) comprised dilemmas between the protection of human rights of research

subjects and the promotion of research. Of these, category (ii) is considered likely to occur in researchers who study vulnerable people. Researchers need to carefully examine the value of their research and make efforts to minimize the burden on the subjects in order to protect the human rights of the subjects.

Conclusion:

In the present study, three types of ethical dilemmas were identified among nursing researchers in Japan.

Title:

Ethical Dilemmas Encountered by Nursing Researchers in Japan

Keywords:

Ethical Dilemmas, Nurse Researchers and Research Ethics

Abstract Summary:

This study is to clarify the ethical dilemmas among nurse researchers in Japan. After qualitative and inductive analysis of the descriptions of 35 respondents, three categories were identified.

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