



Nurses' Professional Behavior in Aggression by the Patient

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Abstract

The socio-economic conditions, the widespread use of information technology, urbanization and stress in modern society are the determinants of the human mental state. Problems related to the protection and restoration of mental health disorders are especially relevant in the modern world. The psychic phenomenon called emotion is related to the instincts, needs and motives of the person. These are experiences that occur at a given moment, which are defined as the subjective coloration of internal experiences of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. They are influenced by various factors such as age, gender, temperament, life experience, upbringing, environmental impact, health, irritants and others [1, 2]. The reasons for a person's aggressive behavior are diverse - biological, psychological, ethological, social. According to the World Health Organization, aggression is based on individual, social, cultural and environmental factors [4]. Aggression and violence are among the most challenging aspects of clinical practice for nurses in all situations. Any act or behavior directed against another person or the person itself that causes physical, mental and emotional distress can be called violence. Violence is an anti-human act and is a type of crime and violates the dignity and interests of the individual [5]. The purpose of this study is to determine the awareness and ability of nurses to deal with aggressive behavior on the part of the patient during hospital treatment. Experts' evaluation of the developed manual for professional behavior of nurses in the case of aggressive behavior by the patient was carried out. Material and methods. An anonymous survey was conducted among 200 nurses from 6 university hospitals in Sofia during 2018. Results and discussion. A leading factor in patients' aggressive behavior is the disease process and the discrepancy between patient expectations and hospital reality. The most common forms of aggression are non-verbal and indirect, which are aimed at hurting and degrading the nurse's personality. Conclusion. Experts estimate that the developed manual on the professional behavior of nurses in the face of aggressive patient behavior is sufficiently informative and specific for staff to make adequate decisions in such situations.

Keywords: nurses, aggression, patient, professional behaviour

1. Introduction

The causes of aggressive behaviour of a person are diverse – biological, psychological, ethological, social. According to the World Health Organization, aggression is based on individual, social, cultural and environmental factors. Aggression and violence are among the most challenging aspects of clinical practice for nurses in all situations. Any action or conduct directed against another person or one's own person that causes physical, mental, and emotional distress can be called violence. Violence is an anti-humane act and is a type of crime and violates the dignity and interests of the individual. [9]. Nurses carrying out activities and care in structures such as emergency rooms, intensive care units, hospital departments often take care of people who respond with a violent and aggressive behaviour, which may pose a significant risk to themselves, to other patients and to healthcare professionals. In this way, prevention and management of behavior are important skills, both for the nurse and for the students who are trained to assimilate the profession.

Staff surveys show that between 75% and 100% of medical staff in psychiatric units were attacked by a patient at a certain stage of his career. Between 2011 and 2013, workplace attacks ranged from 23 540 and 25 630 per year, with 70-74% happening in healthcare, and 27 of the 100 health deaths in 2013 were due to attacks and acts of violence in the United States. [5].

Since nurses spend a lot of time with patients, they have an impact on patients. It seems that when patients have a positive experience in nursing, nurses also have a good and healthy working environment. A healthy working environment creates a climate where nurses are challenged to use their experience, skills and clinical knowledge. In addition, nurses working in such an environment are encouraged to provide patients with excellent medical care.

Patient satisfaction is a definite indicator for evaluating and improving the quality of care. When healthcare organisations assess patient satisfaction, professionals can use the results for internal quality improvement. Specialists use the experience and preferences of patients to correct their own practice and to make visible their contribution to the results of patients. Aggression often occurs in



situations where the patient's needs are not fully satisfied and anger and frustration occur. The emergence of aggression is associated with the complex interaction of intrapersonal and interpersonal factors.

The factors related to the social context of patients are: poverty, stressful life events and victimization. Interpersonal factors in combination with environmental stressors can contribute to the vulnerability of patients in aggressive reactions.

2. Aim of the study

The purpose of this study is to establish the awareness and ability of nurses to deal with aggressive behaviour by the patient during hospital treatment. A handbook on the professional behaviour of nurses in aggressive behaviour on the part of the patient has been developed to enhance the professional competencies of nurses in hospital care in relation to strategies for coping with aggressiveness by the patient.

3. Material and methods

An anonymous survey of 200 nurses from 6 University Hospitals in the city of Sofia was conducted in 2018. An expert evaluation of the developed Manual of professional behaviour of nurses on aggressive behaviour by the patient was carried out. The Expert Group is composed by 8 academics from Medical University-Sofia. The study was carried out within the framework of a project funded by the Medical Science Council of Medical University of Sofia for the year 2018.

4. Results

The results on the awareness of nurses from the University Hospitals in Sofia are presented at the following figure 1.

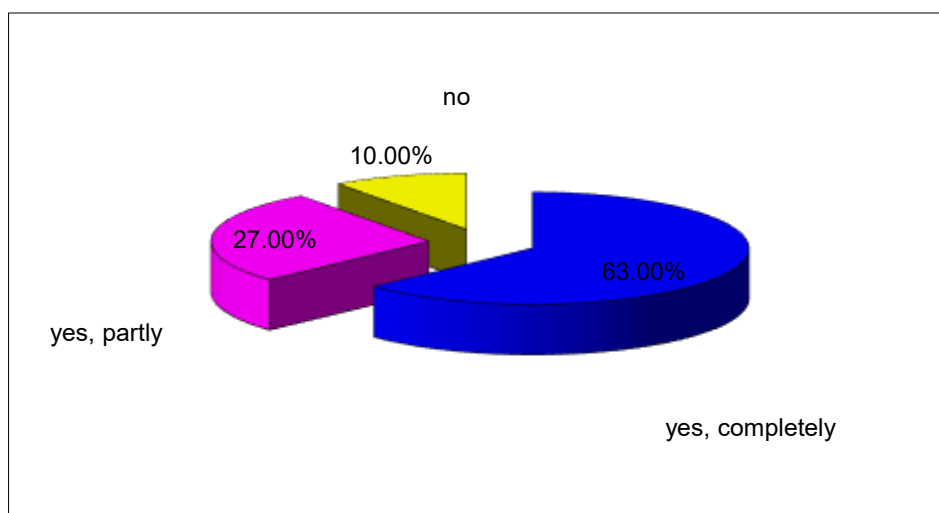


Figure 1. Awareness and understanding of the concept of "aggressive behavior" by nurses

More than half of the nurses (63.00%) respond positively to the question of knowledge of the notion of violence. "Yes, partly" indicate 27.00% and a negative response indicate 10.00%. According to the results obtained, it is clear that nurses have a need for training to be specifically aimed at studying aggressive behavior.

The types and forms of aggression on the part of patients meeting nurses during their professional activities are presented on table 1.

Table 1: Types and forms of aggression observed by nurses during their work

Types and forms of aggression	Yes, very often	Not very often	No
Self-aggression - self-harm, guilt and doom.	17.00 %	63.00%	20.00%
Physical aggression - direct physical attacks.	19.50%	67.00%	13.50%



Verbal aggression - behavior associated with humiliation, harm, insulting a person through shouting, threats and other verbal manifestations.	39.00%	32.50%	28.50%
Non-verbal aggression - humiliating and hostile attitude.	56.00%	29.00%	15.00%
Indirect aggression - spreading lies, slanders and gossips to injure the person.	52.00%	26.50%	21.50%

According to nurses, the most often observed in practice are non-verbal and indirect aggression. There is a significant relative share of respondents who indicate that verbal aggression is not observed in practice. This means that patients refrain from verbal aggression towards nurses in hospitals, but show the nurses a disrespectful attitude and attitude hurting the nurse's personality. The extent to which nurses can identify signs of aggressive behaviour becomes clear from the following figure 2.

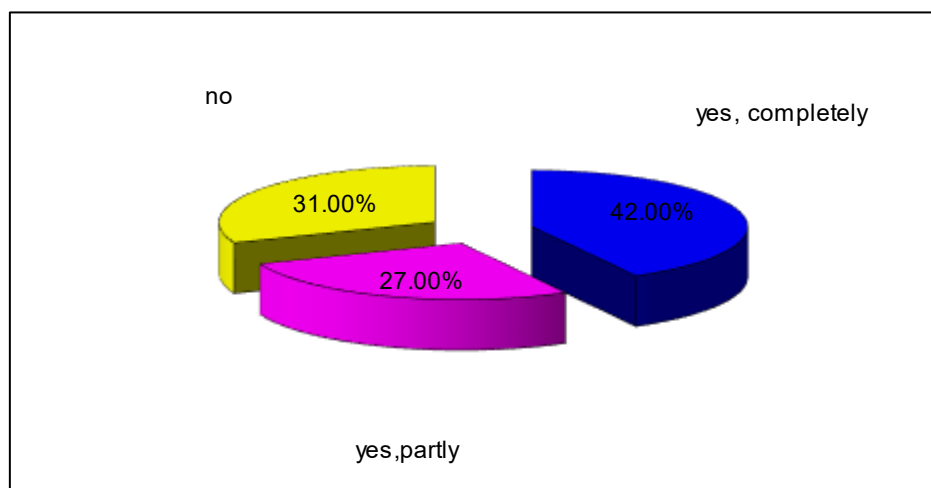


Figure 2. Competences for recognizing the signs of aggression on the part of the patient

The largest relative share of nurses who believe they have the competences to recognize the signs of aggression on the part of a patient. Answer "Yes, partly" indicate 27.00%. A negative answer to the question gives 31.00%. These results show that nurses from university hospitals in Sofia need to improve their qualification to recognize the signs of aggression and to take appropriate professional decisions when such situations arise. Well trained and prepared nurses can use different strategies to deal with the patient's aggressive behaviour.

The results regarding the procedures introduced in the nursing practice for assessing the risk of aggression are presented on Fig. 3

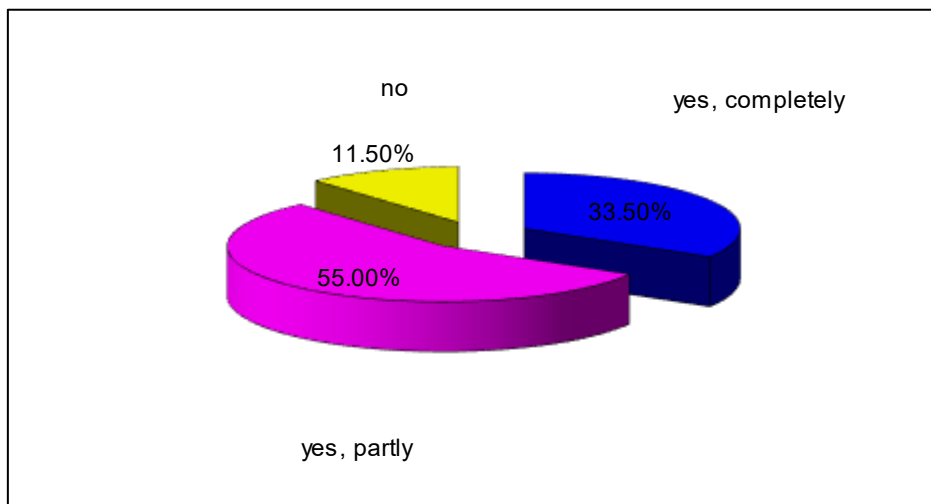


Figure 3. Introduced in practice procedures for risk assessment of aggression

More than half of the nurses surveyed indicated that there were no procedures in place to assess the risk of aggression. A positive response to this question indicated 33.50% of respondents. It is necessary to introduce into the organisation of hospital structures procedures to enable staff to assess the risk of aggressive behaviour of patients.

The opinion of nurses regarding the main causes that provoke aggressive behavior of patients is presented on table 2.

Table 2. Main reasons provoking aggressive behavior

Reasons	Yes, often	very	Yes occasionally	No
Biological - hormonal, neurological, biochemical	55.00%		28.00%	17.00%
Gender differences	17.00%		28.50%	54.50%
Addictions - alcohol, drugs.	34.50%		21.50%	44.00%
Pain and discomfort	39.50%		29.00%	31.50%
Discrepancy between the patient's expectations and the real facts	49.00%		27.00%	24.00%
Anger, irritation and frustration	43.50%		34.50%	22.00%

According to nurses, the leading cause of aggressive behavior of patients is the presence of health problems, as a result of violations of various organs and systems. Secondly, the discrepancy between the expectations of the patient and the real facts is indicated by 49.00% of respondents and thirdly – 43.50% give an answer - anger, irritation and dissatisfaction of the patient from hospital stay. It is normal to expect aggressive behavior on the part of the patient during hospital treatment, which is conditioned by development of pathological processes within the body and the requirements of hospital stay.

5. Discussion

The findings of potential violence requires the implementation of strategies such as communication strategies, which include: a calm appearance; to speak quietly; to speak in an impartial manner; to speak in a neutral and concrete way with an area between the nurse and the patient; to show respect for the patient; to avoid intense direct contact with the eyes; to demonstrate control of the situation without taking a too authoritarian position; to facilitate the patient's position; to listen to the patient; to avoid early interpretations; not making promises that cannot be respected. If the nurse communicates with an authoritarian, controlled or disrespectful manner, the patients are therefore angry and react with aggressive behaviour. [8].



Lyneham (2000) found that nurses, in their daily work, suffer insults, intimidation and aggression, usually from patients and/or their relatives [3]. Nurses face not only verbal aggression, but also an imminent threat of physical abuse, which is a prerequisite for developing emotional responses such as anger, anxiety, helplessness, sadness and depression [6]; [7].

All this determines the need for training providing professional skills for an adequate response to health care professionals in situations of aggressive behaviour. To assist the nurses in coping with aggressive behaviour, the "Handbook of Professional behaviour of the nurse in the situation of aggression on the part of the patient" was elaborated. The main parts of the handbook include: Psychological characterization of a person's personal profile with violent behavior; Types and forms of aggression; Causes of aggressiveness; Procedures to assess the risk of aggressive behaviour; implementation of behavioural strategies; Communication strategy and patient training.

In order to identify the positive and negative sides of the developed handbook, it was provided to an expert group to give its opinion on the applicability of the handbook in Nursing Practice. According to the experts, there is sufficient information about violence and aggressiveness – sufficient and clear enough. From the handbook, nurses can get acquainted with the forms of aggression, as well as the factors that provoke the aggressive behavior of the patient. The developed handbook specifies the professional responsibility of the nurse regarding behavior and relationships with an aggressive patient. The handbook also defines the responsibility of the management personnel for setting up an organisation that identifies the specific actions of staff. The experts give a positive assessment of the included methodology for assessing the risk of aggression and the described communication strategy of the nurse with patients with aggressive behaviour.

6. Conclusion

Nurses have a great need for training and support in real practice in order to cope effectively with the situations of aggressive behaviour by the patient. In a hospital environment, patients exhibit first of all non-verbal or indirect aggression towards nurses, and cases of verbal and physical aggression are significantly less. According to nurses, a major cause of aggressive behavior of patients is their medical condition, as well as their dissatisfaction with their expectations. Nurses are not well trained to recognise the signs of aggression, making it difficult for them to effectively deal with these situations in practice. In hospitals, it is necessary to focus on developing and introducing procedures to assess the risk of aggression, which will help nurses to make correct and on-time decisions. By conducting training of nurses and introducing the "Manual of Professional conduct of the nurse in a situation of aggression on the part of the patient" in university hospitals, it is possible to improve the relationship between nurses and patients and to improve the quality of nursing care.

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