

A Study to Assess the Knowledge Regarding Legal Responsibilities in Nursing

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Abstract: Accountability is an essential concept of professional practice. Nursing practice is surrounded by many legal aspects because nurses are accountable for their professional judgments and action. Nurses deal with the most fundamental human events like birth, death and suffering. They encounter many legal issues surrounding these sensitive areas a good knowledge of legal aspects of health care is necessity. Good knowledge of legal aspects of health care is necessity for the implementation of high quality of nursing practice in the world of latest medical technological advances. The major findings of the study showed that 96.67% of the participants were female, 73.33% of them belong to the age group of 21-30 years of age, 68% were diploma holders, 90.66% of staff nurses were trained from private institutes and 64.67% of them were with 0-5years experience. 30.67% of staff nurses did not attend any in service education. The knowledge scores in each category abbreviations (2.33), legal liability (4.26), legal terms (2.56), legal responsibilities (14.99) and basic rights (1.44). The relationship of selected variables showed that there was no significant relationship between nurses knowledge with their age, gender, duration of clinical experience and in service education. There was a significant relationship between level of knowledge with their professional qualification and training institute ($p < 0.05$).

Keywords: Legal, Accountability, Judgment, Staff nurses, Knowledge

I. INTRODUCTION

“The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing.”

John Powel

Nurses deal with the most fundamental human events like birth, death and suffering, they encounter many legal issues surrounding these sensitive areas. Accountability is an essential concept of professional practice. 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 technological advances a good knowledge of legal aspects of health care is necessity.

Safe Nursing practice includes an understanding of the legal boundaries in which nurses must function. An understanding of the implication of the Law support critical thinking on the Nurses part. Laws are changing constantly to reflect changes society, changes in the delivery of health care and advancement in medical technology. The role of Nurses and the ethical dilemmas associated with client care have increased and often become legal issues.

Contemporary law is composite of the rules regulations , morals and norms by which the society governs itself. Without law, the society could not deal with disputes and problems in an orderly fashion . The law serves many valuable functions when applied to nursing practice. It differentiates nursing practice form the practice of other health care professions and describe and protect the rights of clients and nurses. For these reasons, the nurses should have an understanding of the basic legal concepts as they relate to nursing practice.

Legal responsibility in nursing practice means the way in which nurses are obligated to obey the law in professional activities. It is always better that all nurses should understand the legal responsibility. When assuming a position to take care of a client, as a professional nurse needs to update with the fast changing and advancing professional knowledge to provide safe nursing to their consumer on the basis of their need.

As staff nurses providing comprehensive care to patients, they should have knowledge regarding legal terms, legal liability, legal responsibilities and basic rights in nursing; it would result in delivery of safe and competent care to the client.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To assess knowledge regarding legal responsibilities in nursing among staff nurses.
2. To identify deficit areas in knowledge regarding legal responsibilities in nursing.
3. To find out relationship between knowledge and demographic variables such as Age, Gender, Professional Qualification, Work Experience, Training Institutes and In-service education.
4. To prepare booklet regarding legal responsibilities in nursing.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research approach and design: A non-experimental, descriptive design was used for study.

Population: The target population was staff nurses of selected hospitals, Ludhiana, Punjab.

Sample and Sampling techniques: Total sample size was 150 staff nurses. Purposive sampling technique was used for selection of sample.

Inclusion criteria: It included staff nurses

- who were working in clinical areas of selected Hospitals, Ludhiana, Punjab.
- who were willing to participate in the study.

Description of Tool:

Part 1: Demographic variables

Part 2: 36 Self Structured Questionnaire to assess the knowledge regarding legal responsibilities in nursing among staff nurses.

Data collection procedure:

The procedure of data collection was carried out in the month of December, 2014. A formal written permission was obtained from head of department of selected Hospitals, Ludhiana, Punjab after discussing the purpose and objective of the study with him. Then, the details of the study and need of study was explained to staff nurses and verbal consent was obtained. Keeping in mind the inclusion and exclusion criteria, sample was identified and information data was collected from staff nurse by giving self structured questionnaire. Self structured questionnaire was given to staff nurses and filled in front of investigator. Then the findings of all groups were recorded and compared to assess knowledge about legal responsibilities in nursing.

Ethical consideration:

Before conducting the study –

- Permission was taken from Ethical Committee of Institute of Nursing Education, Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib (C) Hospital, Ludhiana.
- Permission was taken from nursing superintendent of Dayanand Medical College & Hospital, Ludhiana, Punjab.
- Permission was taken from medical superintendent of Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib (c) Hospital, Ludhiana, Punjab.

IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data was analyzed by using Descriptive and Inferential statistics. In Descriptive Statistics-frequency, Percentage, mean, mean percentage and standard deviation were calculated. In Inferential statistics, z test and ANOVA were applied. The major findings of the study showed that 96.67% of the participants were female, 73.33% of them belong to the age group of 21-30 years of age, 68% were diploma holders, 90.66% of staff nurses were trained from private institutes and 64.67% of them were with 0-5 years experience. 30.67% of staff nurses did not attend any in service education.

Table -1

Percentage Distribution of Staff Nurses according to Level of Knowledge regarding Legal Responsibilities in Nursing

N = 150

Level of Knowledge	%	Score	n	%
Excellent	>90	>32	0	0
Good	71-90	26-32	63	42
Average	51-70	19-25	84	56
Below average	≤50	≤18	03	02

Maximum score = 36

Minimum score = 0

Table 1 depicts that maximum 56% of staff nurses had average knowledge regarding Legal responsibilities in nursing, followed by 42% of staff nurses had good knowledge and least 2% of staff nurses had below average knowledge regarding legal responsibilities in nursing. Hence, it can be inferred that highest 56% of staff nurses had average knowledge regarding legal responsibilities in nursing.

Table- 2

Mean and Mean Percentage of Knowledge of Staff Nurses regarding Legal Responsibilities in Nursing.

N = 150

Area of Knowledge	Maximum Score	Mean Knowledge Score		
		Mean	Mean %	Rank Order
Abbreviations	03	2.33	77.77	4
Legal liability	06	4.26	71.11	2
Legal terms	06	2.56	42.77	1
Legal responsibilities	19	14.99	78.99	5
Basic rights	2	1.44	72	3

Maximum score=36

Minimum score=0

Table 2 depicts that the knowledge scores in each category abbreviations (2.33), legal liability (4.26), legal terms (2.56), legal responsibilities (14.99) and basic rights (1.44). It can be concluded that maximum number of staff nurses had higher knowledge regarding legal responsibilities in nursing and least knowledge regarding legal terms. Hence, it can be inferred that there is need for enhancement of knowledge of staff nurses regarding legal terms by means of booklet on legal responsibilities in nursing.

The relationship of selected variables showed that there was no significant relationship between nurses knowledge and age, gender, duration of clinical experience and in service education. There was a significant association between level of knowledge and their professional qualification training ($p < 0.05$) i.e. the graduate nurses scored better than diploma nurses , level of knowledge and training institutes ($p < 0.05$) i.e. private institutes trained nurses scored better than Government institutes trained nurse.

This study had implications in nursing practice, administration, education and research. It is implied that all nursing personnel be provided with a copy of information booklet that may help to them for independent learning to improve their knowledge regarding legal responsibilities in nursing to provide safe nursing practices. The information booklet will also serve as a ready reference in case there is any disparity between nurses, patients and the management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A similar study may be conducted to compare knowledge of private hospitals and Government hospital nurses.
- A similar study can also be replicated on large sample.
- A study can be conducted to assess knowledge, practice and attitude of nurses regarding legal responsibilities in nursing.
- A study can be conducted by selecting experimental and control group for study.
- A study can be conducted to observe significant changes in practice of nurses after providing them with adequate knowledge regarding legal responsibilities in nursing.

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