



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Knowledge and Attitude of Nurses on Legal Aspects in Patient Care

Dr. Malarvizhi. S* and Dr.Rebecca Samson**

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Key words:***Corresponding Author****Dr. Malarvizhi. S****Abstract**

A cross sectional study was conducted to assess the knowledge and attitude of nurses on legal aspects in patient care. 510BSc and Diploma nurses working in Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences Hospital (Private) and Indira Gandhi Government General Hospital (Government) were selected by stratified random sampling technique. Questionnaire was used to collect information regarding socio demographic variables and level of knowledge of legal aspects among nurses. To measure the level of attitude, the semantic differential scale based upon a seven-point rating scale was used. The results revealed that 44.5% (227) of nurses had poor knowledge, 24.1% (123) of nurses had average knowledge, 21.2% (108) of nurses had good knowledge, 8.6% (44) of nurses had very good knowledge and 1.6% (8) of nurses had excellent knowledge. 65.5% (334) of nurses had highly favorable attitude and 34.5% (176) of nurses had moderately favorable attitude. The finding reveals that there was a statistically significant weak positive correlation ($r=0.18$) between knowledge and attitude among nurses ($p<0.001$) on legal aspects inpatient care management. The findings shows that there was significant association between the nurses knowledge with i) age, ii) educational status, iii) years of experience, iv) conferences/workshops attended, v) organization vi) nursing colleagues faced legal problems, vii) legal problems faced by self and viii) being oriented about legal aspects at $p<0.05$ level. There was significant association between the nurses attitude with i) age, ii) organization and iii) oriented about legal aspects at $p<0.05$ level.

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INTRODUCTION

Legal responsibility in nursing practice is becoming of greater importance as each year passes. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of their legal rights in the health care, therefore a nurse should know his/her legal rights. Medical malpractice statistics for the USA in 2003, shows that 16,339 (7.9%) nurses and nursing-related practitioners had a malpractice report made against them in the US (1990-2003, US DHHS).

During the clinical postings the investigators has come across various negligence and medication errors that arise due to the lack of knowledge of staff nurses which has put the hospital and themselves into various issues. So the researcher proposed this study to determine the level of knowledge, attitude of nurses on legal aspects in patient care management in different hospitals of Puducherry.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the knowledge of nurses on legal aspects in patient care management.
2. To assess the attitude of nurses on legal aspects in patient care management.
3. To examine the relationship of knowledge with the attitude of nurses on legal aspects in patient care management.
4. To assess the association of knowledge and the attitude of nurses on legal aspects in patient care management with the selected background variables.

HYPOTHESES

H₁ There is a significant relationship between the knowledge and attitude of nurses on legal aspects in patient care management.

H₂ There is a significant association between knowledge of nurses on legal aspects in patient care management with selected background variables.

H₃ There is a significant association between attitudes of nurses on legal aspects in patient care management with selected background variables.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- a. To know about knowledge of nurses on legal aspects in patient care management pertaining to admission and discharge of patient, administration of medication, informed consent, documentation and patient safety.
- b. To know about the attitude of nurses on legal aspects in patient care management pertaining to admission and discharge of patient, administration of medication, informed consent, documentation and patient safety..
- c. Recommendation to higher authority.
- d. To prepare guidelines for nurses regarding legal aspects of nurses in patient care management to prevent them from law suit.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Relevant and appropriate research studies on literatures related to legal aspects in patient care, knowledge of nurses on legal aspects, attitude of nurses on legal aspects, literature related to admission and discharge of patient, administration of medication, Informed consent, documentation and patient safety were gathered.

CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

The conceptual framework of this study was derived from Patricia Benner from novice to expert model (Advanced beginners, Competent, Proficient and Expert). This model was selected because the level of knowledge of nurses differs at different level of positions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach & Design: Descriptive Survey Approach (cross sectional)

- **Setting:** Pondicherry Institute of Medical sciences and Indira Gandhi Government General Hospital (Pondicherry)
- **Sample:** Trained nurses working in selected hospitals of Puducherry.
- **Sampling Technique:** By stratified random sampling technique, the samples were drawn from each stratum by proportionate method.
- **Sample Size:** The sample size for this study was 510 nurses.

DEVELOPMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOL

Questionnaire was used to collect information regarding socio demographic variables and level of knowledge of legal aspects among nurses. To measure the level of attitude, the semantic differential scale based upon a seven-point rating scale was used.

Questionnaire consisted of multiple choice questions of 30 items on the following aspects like Legal terms, Admission and Discharge, Administration of Medication, Informed consent, Documentation and Patient's safety.

RELIABILITY OF THE TOOL:

It was elicited by using "test- retest method". Karl Pearson's correlation 'r' was computed and the value was 0.75 (knowledge), and 0.78 (attitude) indicating that the tool was highly reliable for the final study.

VALIDITY OF INFORMATIONAL BOOKLET

The initial draft of the information booklet was given to 8 nursing experts and 2 medical professions who were involved in direct patient care and a lawyer. The experts were requested to validate the information booklet. The suggestions of experts and the guide were incorporated and the information booklet was modified and finalized.

PILOT STUDY

The pilot study report revealed that among 60 nurses, 50% (30) of the nurses had poor knowledge, 33.3% (20) of nurses had average knowledge and 16.7% (10) of nurses had good knowledge respectively. The study finding also revealed that 58.3% (35) of nurses had moderately favorable attitude and 41.7% (25) of nurses had highly favorable attitude.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

510 samples who fulfilled the inclusive criteria were selected by stratified Sampling technique (proportionate method). The hospitals were divided into strata of Government hospital and Private hospital and further the nurses were divided into strata of Diploma nurses and B.Sc nurses. The samples were drawn from each stratum by proportionate method (by using SPSS for windows version 17) in the clinical area of Indira Gandhi Government General Hospital (298) nurses and Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences Hospital (212) nurses, Puducherry. On selection of the study subject, a brief introduction about the self was given to the subjects followed by detailed explanations regarding the purpose of the study and expectations from the nurses during the data collection were informed. The Informed consent was obtained in written form and the confidentiality of the responses was assured.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table – 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of socio demographic and

attribute variables of nurses.

N=510

S.No	Socio demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	21-30 yrs	226 44.3
		31-40 yrs	166 32.5
		41-50 yrs	118 23.1
2	Educational status	Diploma in Nursing	304 59.6
		B.Sc Nursing	206 40.4
3	Years of work Experience	6 months to 1 yr	64 12.5
		1.1 -5yrs	111 21.8
		5.1-10 yrs	71 13.9

		10.1-20 yrs	169	33.1
		>20 yrs	95	18.6
4	Present place of work	Medical ward	152	29.8
		Surgical ward	134	26.3
		C.C.U	109	21.4
		Operation Theatre	34	6.7
		Pediatric ward	21	4.1
		Psychiatric ward	21	4.1
		Obstetrics and Gynecology ward	27	5.3
		Special Ward	12	2.3
5	Organization	Government Hospital	298	58.4
		Private hospital	212	41.6
6	Conferences/ Workshops attended	Yes	144	28.2
		No	366	71.8
7	Read articles on Legal aspects	Yes	280	54.9
		No	230	45.1
8	Source of information	Nursing curriculum	60	11.8
		In-service education	243	47.6
		Nursing practice	69	13.5
		Mass media	25	4.9
		None	113	22.2
9	Legal problems faced by Nursing colleagues	Yes	77	15.1
		No	433	84.9
10	Legal problems faced by self	Yes	13	2.5
		No	497	97.5

11	Oriented to Patient's bill of rights	Yes	444	87.1
		No	66	12.9
12	Oriented to legal aspects of nurses	Yes	469	92
		No	41	8

Table – 1 represents the percentage distribution of socio demographic and attribute variables of nurses. Regarding age, 44.3% of nurses belong to the age group of 21-30 years, 32.5% belong to the age group of 31- 40 years and 23.1% belong to the age group of 41 – 50 years. On analysis of educational status 59.6% were Diploma nurses and 40.4% were B.Sc nurses.

With regard to the years of work experience of nurses, 33.1% of nurses had 10 – 20 years of working experience, 21.8% of nurses had 1- 5 years of experience, 18.6% of nurses had 20 years of experience, 31.9% of nurses had 5 – 10 years of experience and 12.5% of nurses had less than 1 year of experience.

Considering the present place of work of nurses around 1/3rd of nurses 29.8% were posted in medical ward, 26.3% of nurses were posted in surgical ward, 21.4% of nurses were posted in C.C.U, 6.7% of nurses were posted in operation theatre, 5.3% of nurses were posted in Obstetrics and Gynecology ward, 4.1% of nurses were posted in Pediatric ward, 4.1% of nurses were posted in Psychiatric ward and 2.3% of nurses were posted in special ward.

Among 510 samples of nurses, 58.4% of nurses were working in Government hospital and 41.6% of nurses were working in Private hospital.

On interpretation of conferences/ workshops attended by nurses, majority of them 71.8% did not attend conferences/ workshops and 28.2% of nurses attended conferences/ workshops.

On analysis of articles read by nurses 54.9% of them had read the article on legal aspects and 45.1% of nurses haven't read the articles on legal aspects in the magazines/ journals/ newspapers.

Considering the source of information 47.6% of nurses had their source of information from in-service education, 22.2% of nurses did not receive information from any source, 13.5% of nurses had their source of information from nursing service, 11.8% of nurses had their source of information from nursing curriculum and 4.9% of nurses had their source of information from mass media.

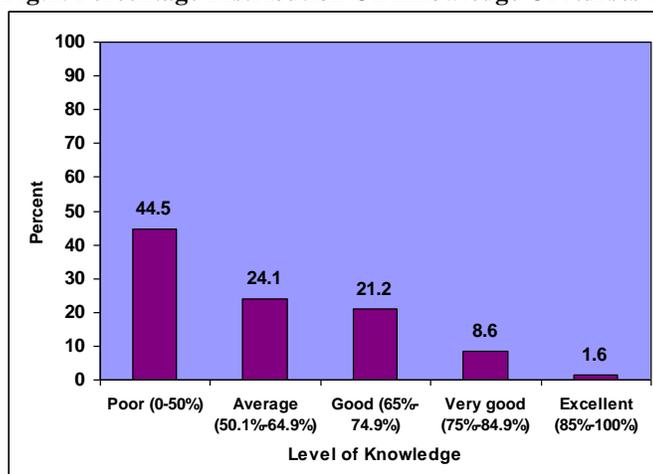
With respect to Legal problems faced by nursing colleagues, most of them 84.9% haven't faced legal problems and 15.1% of nurses replied that their nursing colleagues faced legal problems.

Regarding the legal problems faced by self, majority 97.5% of nurses did not face legal problems and 2.5% of nurses had faced legal problems in clinical area.

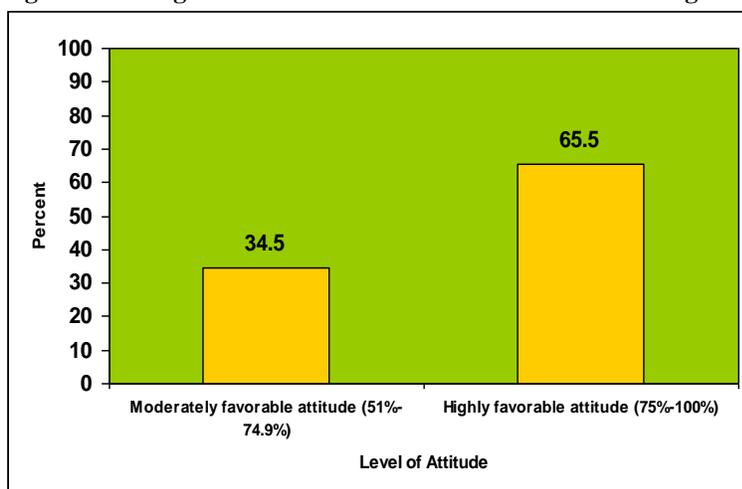
With respect to orientation to Patient's bill of rights 87.1% of nurses were oriented to patient's bill of rights and 12.9% of nurses were not oriented to patient's bill of rights.

On analysis of orientation to legal aspects of nurses majority of nurses 92% were oriented to legal aspects in relation to patient care management and 8% of nurses were not oriented to legal aspects in relation to patient care management.

OBJECTIVE: 1

Fig:1. Percentage Distribution On Knowledge Of Nurses On Legal Aspects

The above graph (**Fig:1**) describes percentage distribution of level of knowledge of nurse son legal aspects. It reveals that 44.5% of nurses had poor knowledge and 55.51% of nurses had average and above average knowledge.

OBJECTIVE: 2**Fig:2. Percentage Distribution On Attitude Of Nurses On Legal Aspects**

The above graph(Fig:2) outlines the percentage distribution of level of attitude of nurses. It reveals that 65.5% of nurses had highly favorable attitude and 34.5% of nurses had moderately favorable attitude.

OBJECTIVE: 3**Table:2. Percentage Distribution Of Knowledge With Attitude Of Nurses On Legal Aspects**

Level of knowledge	n	Moderately favorable attitude		Highly favorable attitude	
		n	%	n	%
Poor (0-50%)	227	81	35.7%	146	64.3%
Average and above (>50%)	283	95	33.6%	188	66.4%

The above table-2,shows the percentage distribution of knowledge with the attitude of nurses on legal aspects in patient care management. Highly favorable attitude was found to be 66.4% among nurses with knowledge of average and above.

Relationship Of Knowledge With The Attitude Of Nurses On Legal Aspects:

There's a statistically significant weak positive correlation ($r=0.18$) between knowledge and attitude among nurses ($p<0.001$). **Therefore the research hypothesis H₁ was accepted.**

OBJECTIVE:4

Knowledge and Attitude Vs Background Variables

There was significant association of level of knowledge with selected socio demographic variables of age, educational status, years of work experience and organization at $p < 0.05$ level. **Therefore the research hypothesis H₂ was accepted with regard to age, educational status, years of work experience and, organization.** There was significant association of level of attitude with age and organization at $p < 0.05$ level. **Therefore the research hypothesis H₃ was accepted with regard to age and organization.**

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING PRACTICE, NURSING EDUCATION, NURSING ADMINISTRATION & NURSING RESEARCH

*Each ward may be given an information booklet which would serve as a ready reference in case there is any disparity between the nurses, patients and the management.

*A copy of the information booklet may be provided to all staff nurses during their orientation programme.

*In service education programme should be conducted periodically for nursing personnel and help nurses to update their knowledge on legal responsibilities in patient care.

*Administrators must provide adequate information booklet on legal responsibilities which would enable the nurses to act as a patient's advocate and also prevent the loss of hospital management's time and money which may arise due to consumers suing the hospital due to nurse's negligence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

*Studies may be conducted to evaluate the usefulness of an information booklet on legal responsibilities of nurses regarding client care.

*A study can be conducted to observe the significant changes in practice of nurses after providing them with the adequate knowledge on legal responsibilities in client care.

*A study can be done to determine the incidence of malpractice suits against nurses and their consequences in practice.

*A study may be conducted to assess the knowledge of patients regarding their rights to treatment in hospital.

CONCLUSIONS

The proportion of nurses with poor, average, and good knowledge were 44.5% ($n=283$), 24.1% ($n=123$), and 31.4% ($n=160$), respectively. Majority of the nurses (65.5%, $n=334$) had highly favorable attitude and one-third of nurses (34.5%, $n=176$) had moderately favorable attitude. The results revealed significant weak positive correlation between knowledge and attitude among nurses on legal aspects in patient care management. This indicates whenever knowledge level increases, level of attitude also increases and vice-versa.

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***Vice-Dean and **Dean, College of Nursing, Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences, Pondicherry**