

Professional Paper**PSYCHIATRIC NURSING AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF NURSING PRACTICE IN THE PSYCHIATRIC WARD - A NARRATIVE REVIEW****Srdan Živanović¹, Jelena Pavlović¹, Natalija Hadživuković¹, Olivera Kalajdžić¹,
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Published: 30 October 2023**DOI:** 10.58424/annnurs.t36.r1e.4qk**Abstract**

Psychological care involves caring for the patient's psychological needs using a range of skills such as listening, perceiving, communicating, and empathizing, with the ultimate res of alleviating human suffering. The nurse spends the most time with the psychiatric patient; she is with the patient from his admission to the hospital, during his stay, until he leaves the hospital. Observing the patient's behavior, she determines problems in health care. In order for a nurse to solve this problem, she must be educated, experienced in her professional vocation, and have a good knowledge of the healthcare process, because that is the only way she can make an appropriate plan and choose the most appropriate interventions. In addition to knowing the process of health care, a nurse must also be extremely patient and possess certain communication skills due to the nature of the illnesses of patients suffering from psychiatric disorders. Therapeutic communication is actually the core and essence of all interactions between a nurse and a patient. It is often stated that it is the nurse who takes care

of the psychiatric patient and who has the most face-to-face contact with patients. The nurse deals with the total personality of the psychiatric patient, and therefore she applies models that make the assessment of the patient's needs the basis of health care. The main goal of this scientific review is to investigate and analyze the role of psychiatric nursing as an indispensable element in nursing practice, explore its importance for improving the quality of health care and patient well-being, and provide guidelines for the integration of psychiatric nursing in nursing practice.

Keywords: communication, nursing, nurse, patients, psychiatry, psychology

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Introduction

Nurses have a professional obligation to create a zone of mental comfort in their work environment - a pleasant atmosphere, acceptance, understanding, tolerance, empathy, and trust. In her definition of nursing, Virginia Henderson states that nurses contribute to health, healing, and a peaceful death¹. This task cannot be achieved without the component of psychiatric nursing². Psychiatric nursing involves caring for the patient's psychological needs using a series of skills such as listening, perceiving, communicating, and empathizing, with the ultimate goal of alleviating human suffering³. The World Health Organization warns that there is no health without mental health. Mental health is an integral part of normal functioning in everyday life and constitutes harmony between physical and mental health. Over the last two decades, there has been a growing trend in the number of hospitalizations due to psychiatric disorders⁴. The lack of specialists in psychiatry, both in terms of psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses, is evident worldwide⁵. The nurse spends the most time

with the psychiatric patient; she is with the patient from admission to the hospital, during their stay, until they leave the hospital. By observing the patient's behavior, she identifies healthcare problems. In order for a nurse to solve this problem, she must be educated and have a good knowledge of the health care process, because that is the only way she can make an appropriate plan and choose the most appropriate interventions. In addition to knowing the healthcare process, the nurse must be extremely patient and possess certain communication skills due to the very nature of the mental illness of patients who are treated in a psychiatric ward⁶.

Integrating psychiatric nursing through therapeutic communication with psychiatric patients

Back in the late eighties of the 19th century, Florence Nightingale indicated the importance of "the communication that is established between the nurse and the patient"⁷. Her quote from that period is often mentioned: "Always sit within the patient's line of sight, so that when you talk to him, he does not have to turn his head to look at you, where she clearly indicated the importance of establishing non-verbal and therapeutic communication with the patient"⁷. Communication, as a very complex process, is a professional competence that a nurse has during the provision of health care. Communication skills are of great importance in the relationship between a nurse and a psychiatric patient because careless communication can create numerous misunderstandings and problems, such as increasing the patient's anxiety and aggressiveness. On the other hand, good communication between the psychiatric patient and the medical staff is one of the most important prerequisites for accepting the disease, starting treatment, and cooperating—that is, providing health care to such a patient⁸.

There are few professions in which people are so oriented towards others, i.e., to interacting with other people, such as the job of a nurse. To understand the patient, the nurse must possess, in addition to professional competencies, communication skills. Communication is the sending of verbal (voices, words) and non-verbal (facial expression, body movements, etc.) signs for the purpose of exchanging information or emotions between two or more people. Whenever human beings interact, some kind of communication takes place between them. The patient's first contact with the healthcare staff marks further cooperation. It is the nurse who creates, initiates, leads, and ends the first communication. That first communication can be good or flawed, depending on the expertise of the nurse and her communication skills. For cooperation with the patient to be of high quality, the first meeting and communication with the patient should be warm, accommodating, and professional. The conversation should start spontaneously, effortlessly, and patiently, without nervousness or limiting the time of communication. Every patient needs professional help from a doctor and a nurse, which includes a conversation that will help the patient accept his health problems and needs. A nurse should discuss with the patient:

- calm (no rush, same tone of voice),
- precise (no redundant words and data, no terminological ambiguities or uncertainties),
- argued (use only verified data, never guesses or partial information)⁹.

Psychiatric departments of health institutions have always been considered extremely stressful environments for staff who directly deal with and care for patients with aggressive and unpredictable behavior. Psychiatric wards include numerous patients suffering from

several types of mental disorders. Most often, it is difficult for a nurse to establish effective communication with such patients, even in the case of an experienced nurse¹⁰. A psychiatric nurse, as a member of a psychiatric medical team, uses a patient-oriented approach, i.e., tries to help the psychiatric patient mobilize his resources and abilities for the purpose of improvement, recovery, and maintenance of mental health. This patient-centered approach is a nursing process that includes assessment, planning, nursing diagnosis, implementation, and evaluation. All steps of the health care process and interaction with the psychiatric patient are dependent on therapeutic communication. Therapeutic communication is still important as the core and essence of all nurse-patient interactions. It is often stated that the nurse, as a member of the professional team caring for the psychiatric patient, has the most face-to-face contact with the patient. The nurse doesn't just address the patient's current health issues but also the complete personality of the psychiatric patient, applying the healthcare process as a multi-step, scientifically based method in nursing practice¹⁰.

The communication we use to help others has therapeutic value. Therapeutic communication helps the patient make plans, solve problems, and alleviate negative emotions. Any communication achieved in interaction with the patient can be therapeutic, whether it is a short phone call, history-taking, or similar¹¹.

Therapeutic communication helps nurses to:

- Establish a therapeutic nurse-patient relationship.
- Determine the most important concerns of the patient at that moment.

- Assess the patient's perception of the problem while it is happening; it includes detailed activities (behavior and messages) of people involved in the patient's thoughts and feelings towards the situation, others, and himself or herself.
- Make it easier for the patient to express emotions.
- Teach the patient and family the necessary care and nursing skills.
- Recognize the patient's needs.
- Apply interventions designed to take care of the patient's needs.
- Lead the patient towards establishing a plan of action for a satisfying and socially acceptable resolution of situation¹².

The psychiatric nurse tends to concentrate on a structured hospital routine that allows for short periods of interaction between the nurse and the patient. This is a big problem because it is impossible for a nurse to cope with the burden of nursing work and, at the same time, have time for therapeutic communication with the patient¹⁰. Therefore, nurses, especially in clinical hospital practice, should have auxiliary nursing staff, who do not need professional nursing knowledge and experience but nursing instructions and supervision. Without support staff, nurses are professionally undervalued and abused, and their precious time, which they should dedicate to patient care and health care work, is wasted².

In a meta-analysis conducted by O Popa-Velea et al., which included a series of 15 bibliographic references in indexed journals from 1975 to 2010, it is stated that there is a positive correlation between communication skills and adherence to health recommendations. Also, good communication skills affect easier tolerance of chronic diseases, reduction of

additional psychiatric comorbidities, reduction of treatment costs, and a better feeling of patient control, which is directly instructed by therapeutic communication by a health worker, is cited as a key element¹³.

Interpersonal skills

The interpersonal skills that nurses learn are based on social psychology research on communication and social skills, combined with ideas from counseling psychology and psychotherapy. These skills are not specific to mental illnesses or psychotic conditions and disorders; instead, they involve generic listening skills (eye contact, body position and orientation, attention, whispering, use of open-ended questions, reflection, paraphrasing, summarizing, questioning, demonstrating empathy, etc.) coupled with identification of the underlying problem and approaches to resolution¹⁴.

Effective interpersonal skills are central to the nurse's ability to create a strong therapeutic relationship with the patient. As part of health care for psychiatric patients, communication skills form the basis of any intervention. These skills represent the building blocks, or, as Stevenson describes them, "alpha and omega—basic techniques and principles in which anyone involved in the clinical practice of caring for psychiatric patients must be highly skilled." To communicate effectively, a psychiatric nurse must be skilled in the use of communication tools, and this implies knowing which skill to use and why and the ability to skillfully move from one skill to another when the purpose of the interaction requires it. In addition, realizing that different clients and patients have different needs, it is inevitable that

the medical psychiatric nurse will use different skills with different patients in different circumstances in psychiatric institutions. As Stevenson points out, "one size does not fit all".

The communication skills mentioned include:

- Listening
- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing
- Examination
- Non-verbal communication¹⁵.

Empathetic approach of the nurse - greater patient safety during treatment

When arriving at the hospital, the patient is scared, insecure, and distrustful, so he tries to find all this in a positive sense in the medical staff, which he shows in his own way. It is important for him to feel safe, and security is provided by the medical staff, who, with their communication skills, empathic approach, and individual approach, have a great influence on creating a positive effect on the ward. The approach of the nurse when distributing medicines is also important. The patient counts the pills and is sometimes confused by the lack or excess of pills, which happens when the doctor changes the therapy. He is confused by the change in the color of the tablet (yellow for one, green for another, blue for the third, etc.). The nurse is the one who will explain to him and tell him what is happening. A calm, steady voice will give the patient the assurance that he is getting the right medicine in the right way. In such situations, the skill of the nurse in dealing with the patient comes to the fore. The patient lives in his own world, in which he sometimes feels fear and panic and seeks help from the nurses. He asks to be fixed in a protective shirt because he states that he feels safe in it for himself and his surroundings. A nurse is a person who recognizes the patient's fear and looks for a

way to help him. We can often see that the patient crawls into bed and covers his head. The nurse must have the ability to discover the reason for the bed crawl and provide the patient with security and confidence through conversation. A frequent problem is moving patients from one room to another (from acute rooms to a quieter part of the ward). Their words are: "I learned to be here. You are close to me. What if I get sick in the other room? How will I get to you?". Every confession by the patient that he feels bad, that he has voices, and that he feels fear is a sign that he feels safe with the nurse because he knows that she will help him. Sometimes the patient perceives the nurse as a mother. For some patients, the mere presence of a nurse provides security¹⁶.

Conclusion

Any illness, especially hospitalization, leaves negative consequences for all people, affecting all aspects of health. A warm word, psychological support, encouragement, and understanding provided by a holistic approach to the patient act as personal sedatives ordered in the psychiatric ward. Health care as a scientific discipline in the nursing profession has long relied not only on physical care. Psychiatric nursing, together with obstetrics, the therapeutic aspect of care, and health education, form an integral part of modern nursing practice. By integrating psychiatric nursing into practical work with the patient, nursing acquires a new dimension in comprehensive healthcare through the health care system.

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