ISSN (O): 2582-693X

Original Article

“A STUDY TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE REGARDING THE LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN NURSING AMONG THE STAFF NURSE AT SELECTED HOSPITAL WITH A VIEW TO PROVIDE AN INFORMATION BOOKLET”

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: In developing country like India, all the hospitals may not have continuing nursing education cell or the ethical and legal aspects are not highlighted but the public awareness is increasing as a result of advancement in science and technology. Therefore, nurses working in the hospitals also need to be updated with present knowledge on ethical and legal aspects in patient care.

Materials and methods: **Descriptive** design used in this study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the samples. 100 staff nurses were included in this study. The data was collected and organized for data analysis.

Results: Overall knowledge of staff nurses regarding legal and ethical issues shows that was 53.02% with mean knowledge median was 21.21 with standard deviation was 6.188. it showed that staff nurses in selected hospital had average knowledge regarding legal and ethical issues in nursing. There was an association between professional qualification, work experience and knowledge of staff nurses at 0.05 level of significance and $p < 0.05$. Mothers of under five children with joints family had more knowledge regarding legal and ethical issues in nursing.

Conclusion : The level of knowledge of staff nurses reveals that most of 32% participants had Poor knowledge score, 22% had Average knowledge score, and 21% had Good knowledge score and 25% had Very Good knowledge score on Legal and ethical issues in nursing.

Keywords: knowledge, Ethical, Legal, Issues, Staff Nurse

INTRODUCTION:

According to medical dictionary the word ethics is derived from the Greek word “Ethos” which Means “character” and from the Latin word “Mores” which means “customs”.¹

On the other hand law is a system composed of general rules, governing conduct and the procedures for solving disputes, when rules are not followed. When law are broken, it is punishable by authority figure. Law are those rules made by humans which regulate social conduct in a formally prescribed and legally binding manner.²

The legal aspects of nursing are taught and expected to be kept up on throughout every nurse's career. A nursing job is something many young people aspire to but without the legal knowledge behind them, many hospitals will not hire them now that legal issues are becoming more and more problematic.³

As a nurse it has become an important necessity to be aware of the legal aspects associated with caring and helping people in the health industry today. Unfortunately, the more and more negligence cases there are the less and less

people want to get into the health care field fearing legal aspects and the inevitable law suites. The first nursing law created was that of nursing registration in 1903.⁴

Ethics is rooted in the ancient Greek philosophical inquiry of moral life. It refers to a system of principles which can critically change previous considerations about choices and actions. It is said that ethics is the branch of philosophy which deals with the dynamics of decision making concerning what is right and wrong.⁵

Nursing ethics is a system of principles governing the conduct of a nurse and is a branch of applied Ethics that concerns itself with activities in the field of nursing. These are the values or moral principles governing relationships between the nurse and patient, the patient's family, other members of the health profession and the general public.

The code of ethics for registered nurses is a statement of ethical commitment of nurses to those they serve. Nurses have developed it for their profession and set forth the ethical standards by which they are to conduct their nursing practice (CAN code of ethics 2002).

The legal implications of nursing practice are related to licensure, state and federal laws, scope of practice and a public expectation that nurses practice at a high professional standard⁶

Ethics deals with standards of conduct and moral judgement. The major principles of health care ethics that must be upheld in all situations are beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy, and justice. beneficence means promoting or doing good. Nurses work to promote their client best interest and strive to achieve optimal outcomes.

Autonomy stands for independence and the ability to be self directed. Clients have the right of self determination and are entitled to decide what happens to them ; therefore, competent adults have the capacity to consent to or refuse treatment . nurse must respect the client wishes, even if they don't agree with them.

Finally, justice requires that all clients be treated equally and fairly. Nurses face issue of justice daily when organizing care for their clients and deciding how much time they will spend with each based on

clients need and fair distribution of resources.

Since nurses address complex ethical and human right issues on a regular basis, the American nurses association board of directors and congress on nursing practice first initiated the code of ethics for nurses in 1985 to delineate the code of responsibilities and conduct expected as a member of society , nurses have a responsibilities to engage in shared decision making particularly when the decision are value laden, and when there frequently appears to be no “right” or “wrong” answer.⁷

Nurses are expected to adhere to the standard of practice in carrying out their professional responsibilities. These standards are the reasonable expectations placed on nurses by the Nursing and Midwifery decree (1979) to ensure that nurses provide safe, responsible and adequate care to clients. Professional misconduct occurs when these standards are breached. Nurses have a commitment to help regulate nursing to protect the public interest because it is in the interest of the public that the profession evolved. Being a member of the profession brings with it the

respect and trust of the public, to continue to deserve this respect, nurses have a duty to participate in, and promote the growth of the profession to uphold the standard of the profession and to conduct them in a manner that is becoming of the profession.

Hospitals are now not willing to hire nurses without the legal knowledge now that legal issues are becoming more problematic. In order to avoid liability and guard against negligence or malpractices suits, the nurse must be aware of the legal responsibilities of each aspect of nursing role. The primary goals of professional accountability of nursing are to maintain high standards of care and to prevent the patients from harm. Nurses should be aware of each action taken, be able to defend their actions and be willing to accept the consequences of their actions. Personal accountability increases with the degree of autonomy. The higher the degree of autonomy, the greater the accountability. The public's trust in the profession increases proportionately to the degree in which the professional members guard and protect their public interest. Therefore it is imperative for nurses to be

accountable to themselves for proper use of their knowledge and skills in providing care.

The law of Tort is the aspect of law that most nurses are more familiar with. This is the law that involves malpractice and negligence cases. A Tort is basically a wrongful act which produces harm, whether it is intentional or unintentional. Malpractice is a specific tort where the standards of care are not met. Negligence arises when the practitioner is found to have breached his or her duty of care to a client and the client suffered damages (Doughlas Jack, 2005).⁸

In developing country like india , all the hospitals may not have continuing nursing education cell or the ethical and legal aspects are not highlighted but the public awareness is increasing as a result of advancement in science and technology. Therefore, nurses working in the hospitals also need to be updated with present knowledge on ethical and legal aspects in patient care. For example client right to refuse treatment may be in conflict and carry out treatment. Nurse can make better moral decision by thinking in advance about their beliefs and moral values and about the kind of problem they may encounter while caring

for the patient. Every nurse patient contact can produce a legal and ethical situation.

Nurses in their practice, nurses are held responsible to comply with the standards of ethical practice and to ensure that other nurses also comply. The code was revised in 2001 to include issue of advancing nursing science and is based on the opinions and experience of a wide range of nurses. The ANA approved nine provision that address ethical practice issues such as compassion and respect, the

Nurses primary commitment to the patient, patient advocacy, responsibility and accountability, duties, participation in health care environment, advancement of the profession and collaboration⁹

NEED OF THE OBJECTIVES:

01. To assess the level of knowledge regarding legal and ethical issues in nursing among staff nurses.
02. To find out the association between knowledge regarding legal and ethical issues in nursing with selected demographic variable.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The present study was aimed to assess the knowledge of staff nurses

regarding legal and ethical issues in nursing among staff nurses at Shalby Hospital, Jaipur, and Rajasthan Before collecting the data prior permission was obtained from the concerned authority of the Shalby hospital, Jaipur. Keeping in mind the ethical aspect of research data collected after obtaining informed consent of the sample the respondents were assured the anonymity and confidentiality of the information provided by them. The researcher himself collected the data from the subject and data collected within a given period from 11-06-2019 to 26-07-2019. Data were collected from 100 staff nurses working in selected hospital who fulfilled the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

A structured knowledge questionn aire schedule was selected on the basis of the objective of the study, as it was considered to be the most appropriate instrument to elicit responses from the participants.

RESULT:

Assessment of knowledge of staff nurses regarding legal and ethical issues in

nursing

N=100

Level of knowledge	Score	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Poor	0-40%	32	32.0 %
Average	41-60%	22	22.0 %
Good	61-74%	21	21.0 %
Very Good	75% Above	25	25.0 %
Total		100	100.0 %

Assessment of the level of the knowledge of staff nurses showed that most of 32(32.0%) had Poor knowledge score, 22(22.0%) had Average knowledge score, and 21 (21.0%) had Good knowledge score and 25 (25.0%) had Very Good knowledge regarding Legal and ethical issues in nursing.

CONCLUSION:

This study reveals that most of 32% participants had Poor knowledge score, 22% had Average knowledge score, and 21% had Good knowledge score and 25% had Very Good knowledge score on Legal and ethical issues in nursing.

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