

Knowledge and attitude survey regarding pain among nurse students of selected colleges in Biratnagar

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Abstract

Pain is the most common reason why people seek medical attention. Nurses are the professionals who spend more time and round the clock with patient than any other member of health care professions. Pain management is a priority in nursing care but nursing students often find it a challenge. That is why nurse must possess the basic knowledge to identify the presence of pain in patients, to measure its intensity and make the steps necessary for treatment. Nursing students must be adequately prepared, in terms of knowledge and skill, to manage pain. For that nurse educators need to understand nursing students' pain knowledge and attitudes in order to design interventions to enhance their readiness for pain management. Therefore, a descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to investigate the knowledge and attitudes regarding pain. The "Knowledge and Attitudes Survey Regarding Pain" tool was applied to 64 post basic bachelor nursing students by convenient purposive sampling from one private and one Government College. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The age of the respondents ranges from 19 to 32 years with the mean age of 24.23 years. Most of the nurses are from ICU ward and have more than 2 years of working experience. The result of the study showed that many of the respondents 70.31% (n=45) were having poor knowledge regarding pain, mostly knowledge regarding the pharmacological aspect (80%) were found insufficient and perception of patient's pain (60%). There is a need to give much attention on pain management in nursing curricula because nurses performed an instrumental role in the assessment and evaluation of pain.

Key words: Pain management, nurse students.

Introduction

Pain treatment is a fundamental human right (Diederik *et al.*, 2010). It is indeed the most common reason why people seek medical attention, and should be prioritize as a global public health problem (Daniel & Summer, 2011). Nurses spend more time with patient than any other member of health care professions. That is why nurse must possess the knowledge to identify the presence of pain in patients, to measure its intensity and make the steps necessary for treatment. Nurses must be able to make decision and act professionally. Professional practice encompasses the application of relevant theories, research, and evidence-based guidelines (AACN 2008). Insufficient knowledge by nurses, nursing students, and nursing educators has emerged as the most significant barrier to effective pain management (Chiu *et al.*, 2003).

Over a decade, many pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatment modalities have been discovered. Yet, despite the existence of easy access, affordable and effective pain relief modalities, without treatment, each year tens of millions of people around the world continue to suffer from moderate to severe pain. Pain is still left undertreated and under estimated.

Inadequate treatment has been linked to health care workers' failure to assess pain and to intervene appropriately. It may also result from the limited attention given to pain management in nursing curricula.

Materials and Methods

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted to investigate the knowledge and attitudes regarding pain. Informed consent was taken verbally from both students and the college authority. Valid tool with test-retest reliability ($r > .80$) and internal consistency reliability ($\alpha > .70$), "The knowledge and attitude survey regarding pain" tool was used.

Each respondent was also asked to complete a demographic data form. The form incorporated questions on age, work experience and the ward they have worked for and if they have ever received any type of training in pain management.

The questionnaires were given to each student during class period. A brief explanation was given regarding the study, noting that there were no risks or benefits to participants from taking part in the study, apart from enriching nursing research on the topic of pain management. Students were also given the opportunity to ask any pertinent questions they had regarding the study. In addition, students were asked to carefully read the instructions given and complete their questionnaires without the aid of textbooks or colleagues. 1-hour time was provided to complete the total questionnaire.

Results and Discussion

The age of the respondents ranges from 19 to 32 years with the mean age of 24.23 years. Most of the nurses have worked in the ICU and medical ward. Regarding the working experience ranges from 12 months to 118 months.

The majority stated that they were full time nursing students with no jobs (75%, $n = 48$), while 25% ($n = 16$) were still working. In the area of knowledge and attitude on pain, 31.25% ($n = 20$) of students had received pain management training, while 68.75% ($n = 44$) of them had no training at all other than that given in their nursing program during certificate level. Inadequate training is one of the important factor among many towards adequate pain management (Omar *et al.*, 2013).

Table 1. Frequency and percent of scores on the knowledge and attitude test. (N=64)

Score range	Frequency	Percent
Greater than 70%	19	29.68
50-70%	32	50
Lesser than 50%	13	20.31

Although the data analyzed showed few areas of competency, there were numerous areas in which significant knowledge gaps existed among students. These areas mostly included questions pertaining to the physiology and pharmacology of pain. This is consistent with previous research studies (Diekmann & Wasseem, 1991; Ferrell *et al.*, 1993; Goodrich, 2006; Bernardi *et al.*, 2007). 32.81% ($n = 21$) of the nurse students has accurately identified the dose of morphin whereas only 28.12% ($n = 18$) of them identified correctly the signs of opioid physical dependence.

The study also revealed that most of the nurse students (29.68%) mentioned addiction as the reason in request of increased dose, which may negatively influence the treatment of chronic pain. Similar findings have been reported by Maria Belén Salazar Posso *et al.* (2013).

It was also interesting to note that the sample of students studied were not aware of being strong patient advocates. Most of the nurse students did not answer correctly in the numeric rating scale. Nursing students in the educational stage recorded patients' pain much lower than patients, as a result of paying attention to objective signs and neglecting subjective signs. Results of other study show that there is a significant difference between the patients' self-assessed score and the score recorded by nurses (Modanloo *et al.*, 2010). Although pain management requires a multidisciplinary approach, nurses are at the frontline of care; assessing, implementing, and evaluating the effectiveness of pain interventions. The study findings demonstrated that nursing students have insufficient knowledge and attitudes regarding pain and its management. Lack of knowledge by students seems to be a major hindrance in good pain management practices. There is the need to broaden nurses' knowledge about pain and its management.

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