

## Challenges Faced by Nurses Working at Tertiary Cancer Hospital, Nepal

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Challenges faced by nurses are the issues that occur while providing care to the patients. Nurses dealing with cancer patients have more stressors than other nurses providing care for general patients. Thus, this study aims to identify the challenges faced by nurses who were working at tertiary cancer hospital of Nepal

**Materials and Methods:** A quantitative cross-sectional study was carried out to identify the challenges faced by nurses who were working at B.P. Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital (BPKMCH). The study was conducted among 90 nurses who had at least six months work experience selected through non-probability purposive sampling and the data was collected through a self-administered semi-structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22.

**Findings:** The findings of the study revealed that most of the respondents had workplace and communication challenges. Major workplace challenges were shortage of staffs (83.3%) and problem of workload (67.8%). Likewise, major communication challenges were language barrier (81.1%) and problem with the breaking bad news (76.7%). Similarly, 66.7% of the respondents reported problem with dealing with the visitors of dying patients as the patient care challenge.

**Conclusion:** This study concludes that nurses working at cancer hospital are facing various challenges specifically related to work place and communication and patient care challenges. Hence, concerned authority of hospital management should make strategic planning and implement measures to address and overcome the challenges faced by nurses to provide job satisfaction and morale so that it can help to provide quality nursing care to the cancer patients.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Cancer Hospital, Nurses

### Introduction

Nurses who deal with cancer patients have more stressors than other nurses who deal with general patients. Oncology nurses confront numerous challenges both inside and exterior the work environment that influence them contrarily (Al Zoubi, Saifan, Alrimawi & Aljabery, 2020). Cancer as a global burden, is increasing day by day. With the increasing number of cancer patients, nurses ought to confront numerous challenges while providing care to the cancer patients. These challenges are; lack of financial support, fear of medical disputes and legal action, lack of human resources, insufficient specialization, lack of communication skills and lack of self-care and stress management skills. Nurses are confronting communication challenges as the patients are from distinctive culture and society (Zheng, Guo, Chen, & McClemen, 2021).

There are many challenges faced by nurses at workplace such as mental violence, shortage of human resources, health hazards, long working hours, lack of recognition, non-nursing roles (Chhugani & James, 2017). Nurses are also facing the problem of inadequate education, policy and nursing practice standards (Ford, 2011).

Cancer patients and their families have high prevalence of psychological stress and need emotional and social support. But, if the nurses lack adequate communication skills, results many communication challenges. A qualitative study conducted by Kolancali and Gustavsson (2020) on the nurse's experience of meeting patients with cancer at the end of life revealed that nurses experienced more challenging with communication and they are also experiencing the problems with lack of support, knowledge and resources from the work place.

Dealing with dying patients, communication issues, lack of coordination among staffs, ethical and moral issues related to patient care and, interpersonal staff conflicts, workload, finding a balance between one's individual and professional life, and lack of in-service training are the common work-related problems faced by oncology

nurses (Bardeh, Naji, & Zarea, 2016, Ko & Kiser-Larson, 2016, Zareifar et al., 2017). Shortage of working staffs, workload, emotional demands, lack of social support, language barriers, and lack of respect from patients and family members and cultural differences are common challenges of oncology nurses which are the sources of work stress (Wazqar, 2019).

Nurses are key care providers for cancer patients and may face many challenges. If their problems/challenges are unnoticed and left unmanaged, it definitely effects in their physical and emotional health which ultimately affects the quality of nursing care. So, this study was conducted to find out the challenges faced by nurses working at tertiary cancer hospital of Nepal.

### Research Methods

A descriptive cross sectional study design was used to find out the challenges faced by nurses working at B.P. Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital (BPKMCH). Challenges faced by nurses were operationally defined as the problems faced by nurses while caring for the cancer patients which included four major aspects: communication challenges, psychological challenges, workplace challenges and professional development challenges.

The study population were nurses working at BPKMCH. Ninety nurses were selected as sample by using non probability purposive sampling technique. Sample size was calculated by the formula  $Sample\ size\ (n) = \frac{Z^2pq}{e^2}$ , where  $n$  = sample size,  $Z = 1.96$  at 95% confidence level, prevalence ( $P$ ) = 50% = 0.5,  $q = 1 - p$  ( $1 - 0.5$ ) = 0.5,  $e$  = margin of error i.e. considered as 10% = 0.1

$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{(0.1)^2} = \frac{3.84 \times 0.25}{0.01} = \frac{0.96}{0.01} = 96$ . Calculated sample size was 96 but available sample was 90.

A self-administered semi structured questionnaire was used for data collection about the challenges faced by nurses which was constructed by researcher by reviewing the literature. It consisted of Part I and part II. Part I consisted of demographic information and part II consisted of challenges faced by the nurses. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Research Committee, BPKMCH. Written informed consent was taken before the data collection by explaining the objective of the study. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained during and after data collection. The data was collected, analyzed, interpreted, by using descriptive statistics in terms of frequency, percentage, mean score in statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 22.

### Findings

Table 1 presents among 90 respondents, most of the respondents (74.4%) were in the age group of 20-30 years. The mean age of the respondents was 28.8 years, majority (92.2%) were Hindu and major ethnicity was Brahmin /Chhetri (76.7%). Likewise, majority of respondents were married (76.7%) and from nuclear family (68.9%). Similarly, majority (81.1%) had done PCL nursing and only 1%, had master degree in nursing education.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents: Age, Religion, Ethnicity, Marital Status, Family Type, Education, Work Experience (n=90)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age (in year)		
20-30	67	74.4
30-40	22	24.4
40-50	1	1.1
<i>Mean±SD: 28.81±4.388    Min±Max: 22±46</i>		
Religion		
Hindu	83	92.2
Buddhist	7	7.8
Ethnicity		
Brahmin/Chhetri	58	64.4
Janajati	17	18.9
Madhesi	12	13.3
Dalit	3	3.3
Marital Status		
Married	69	76.7
Unmarried	21	23.3

Family Type		
Nuclear	62	68.9
Joint	28	31.1
Education		
PCL	16	17.8
BN	73	81.1
MN	1	1.1
Work Experience(years)		
<1 year	9	10
1-2 years	17	18.9
3-5 years	35	38.9
5 years above	29	32.2

Out of 90 respondents, majority (81.1%) reported language barrier challenges. Likewise, equal frequency of respondents 69 (76.7%) had faced communication problem and problem with breaking bad news. Only, 13 (14.4%) respondents had problem with confident in communication (Table 2).

**Table 2: Communication Challenges (n=90)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Communication problem		
Yes	69	76.7
No	21	23.3
Confident in communication		
Yes	77	85.6
No	13	14.4
Language barrier challenging		
Yes	73	81.1
No	17	18.9
Problem with breaking bad news		
Yes	69	76.7
No	21	23.3

In relation to professional development challenges, more than half (56.7%) of respondents stated no opportunity of inward learning classes, 46.7% reported lack of continuing nursing education, 31.1% had not received orientation classes and one-fifth (20%) respondents reported that they were not involved in self-learning activities. Regarding workplace challenges, majority (83.3%) had problem of staff shortage followed by workload (67.8%), lack of co-ordination (32.2%), lack of protocol in working place (16.7%) and 11.1% respondents reported the problem with nurse-to-patient ratio as shown in table 3.

**Table 3: Professional Development challenge and Workplace Challenges**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Received orientation classes		
Yes	62	68.9
No	28	31.1
Any training		
Blood Transfusion	1	1.1
Palliative care	1	1.1
Continuing nursing education participation		
Yes	48	53.3
No	42	46.7
Opportunity of inward learning classes		
Yes	39	43.3
No	51	56.7
Involvement in self-learning activities		
Yes	72	80
No	18	20
Other professional development challenges		
Delay promotion	10	11.1
Lack of training	8	8.9
Workplace Challenges		
Problem of workload		
Yes	61	67.8
No	15	16.7
Problem of staff shortage		
Yes	75	83.3
No	15	16.7
Problem of coordination among staffs		
Yes	29	32.2
No	61	67.8
Other challenges regarding workplace		
Lack of protocol in ward	15	16.7
Problem with nurse-to-patient ratio	10	11.1

In relation to psychological challenges, less than half (48.9%) reported fear of medical disputes followed by job dissatisfaction (47.8%), de-motivation (46.7%), self-care/self-respect, 37(41.1%), lack of incentives/ rewards (22.2%) and lack of self-esteem (20%) respectively as depicted in Table 4.

**Table 4: Psychological Challenges (n=90)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Fear of medical disputes</b>		
Yes	44	48.9
No	46	51.1
<b>Lack of self-care/self-respect</b>		
Yes	37	41.1
No	53	58.9
<b>Lack of self esteem</b>		
Yes	18	20
No	72	80
<b>Lack of respect from others</b>		
Yes	34	37.8
No	56	62.2
<b>Feeling of demotivation</b>		
Yes	42	46.7
No	48	53.3
<b>Feeling of job dissatisfaction</b>		
Yes	43	47.8
No	47	52.2
<b>Other psychological challenges</b>		
Lack of incentives and no rewards	20	22.2
Lack of promotion in time	8	8.9

Regarding patient care challenges (Table 5), out of 90 respondents, majority (66.7%) stated difficulties in dealing with visitors of dying patients followed by difficulty in dealing with end-of-life patient (57.8%), lack of protocol/guidelines (51.1%), handling sophisticated medical equipment (46.7%) and problem with availability of resources for providing patient care,

**Table 5: Patient Care Challenges (n=90)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Lack of protocol guidelines related to specific nursing care</b>		
Yes	46	51.1
No	44	48.9
<b>Difficulties in dealing with end-of-life patient</b>		
Yes	52	57.8
No	38	42.2
<b>Problem with handling sophisticated medical equipment</b>		
Yes	42	46.7
No	48	53.3
<b>Difficulties in dealing with visitors of dying patients</b>		
Yes	60	66.7
No	30	33.3
<b>Lack of resources for providing patient care</b>		
Yes	38	42.2
No	52	57.8

## Discussion

In relation to communication challenges, out of 90 respondents, majority of the respondents (81.1%) had language barrier challenges. Likewise, equal frequency of respondents (76.7%) had faced communication problem and problem with breaking bad news. This finding of the study is closely related with the study conducted by Banerjee (2012) on oncology nurses facing communication challenges with patient and families which showed communication challenges of breaking bad news and skills for providing empathy.

Regarding professional development challenges, more than half (56.7%) of respondents stated lack of opportunity of inward learning classes followed by lack of participation in continuing nursing education (46.7%), lack of orientation classes (31.1%) and lack of self-learning activities respectively. These results of the study are supported by the study conducted in Southeastern Nigeria where out of 133 nurses, 90.9% had faced lack of oncology training and 94.7% had faced lack of continuing education on modification in management of cancer (Iheanacho et al, 2022).

In relation to workplace challenges, majority (83.3%) reported staff shortage followed by problem of workload (67.8%) and problem of co-ordination among staffs (32.2%) respectively. Likewise, 16.7% reported lack of protocol in working ward and 11.1% respondents reported problem with nurse-to-patient ratio. Similar findings are reported in the study done by Iheanacho et al. (2022), which found inadequate staff remuneration, lack of treatment protocol, reduced team spirit among nurses and other health personnel and shortage of nurses as major challenges faced by nurses.

Concerning psychological challenges, less than half (48.9%) reported fear of medical disputes followed lack of incentives/ rewards 22.2%, and lack of self-esteem 20%. These findings are also supported by the study conducted by Al Zoubi et al. (2020) in Jordan which reported fear of medical disputes and legal action as challenges faced by nurses. According to another study conducted in Iran, major challenges faced by nurses are: lack of job satisfaction and lack of coordination (Fatemi , Moonaghi, & Heydari, 2019).

Moreover, regarding patient care challenges, majority of respondents (66.7%) reported difficulties in dealing with visitors of dying patients and more than half of the respondents (51.1%) reported lack of protocol/guidelines related to specific nursing care in their working area. Likewise, 46.7% stated problem with handling sophisticated medical equipment, 57.8% stated difficulty in dealing with end-of-life patient and 42.2% respondents stated problem with availability of resources for providing patient care. These findings of the study are consistent with the study of Iheanacho et al. (2022) where lack of adequate and functional equipment, and shortage of needed materials for nurses to work, were also reported as challenges.

## Conclusion

Being based on the finding of this study, it can be concluded that, nurses working at Tertiary Cancer Hospital, Nepal are facing communication challenges as the major challenges followed by the workplace challenges, professional developmental challenges, patient care challenges and psychological challenges. Hence, concerned authority of hospital management should make strategic planning and implementing measures to address and overcome the challenges faced by nurses so that it can add in the effort to provide quality nursing care to the cancer patients.

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