



“A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE AWARENESS, ATTITUDE AND EXPRESSED PRACTICES REGARDING MEDICO-LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN PATIENT CARE AMONG STAFF NURSES WORKING IN SELECTED HOSPITALS OF JODHPUR.”

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Background: Nursing practices comes under both public law as well as civil law. Nursing is legally sensitive as it deals with human beings. Nurses must follow legal rules to protect themselves and patient safety too. Identification and management of medicolegal issues in patient care is a very important aspect of providing highest quality patient care in hospital settings. The nurses play a majorrole in providing patient care to avoid medicolegal issues. **Objective:** To assess the awareness, attitude and expressed practices regarding medico-legal responsibility in patient care among staff nurses & To find out relationship between awareness and attitude and expressed practices regarding medico-legal responsibility in patient care among staff nurses. **Methods:** A non-experimental quantitative cross-sectional descriptive survey design was adopted in the present study. The population consists of staff nurses working in the selected private Hospitals at Jodhpur. A sample size of 75 staff nurses were selected by using purposive sampling technique. A structured knowledge/ awareness questionnaire, attitude scale and structured expressed practice questionnaire was used for data collection. **Results:** The main findings of study show that 64%, 86.66% and 49.33% of staff nurses had moderately adequate level of awareness, moderately favourable level of attitude and moderately adequate level of expressed practices regarding medicolegal responsibilities in patient care respectively. There is a significant moderate positive correlation between awareness and attitude ($r=0.41$, $p=0.001$) and attitude and expressed practices ($r=0.63$, $p=0.001$) and awareness and expressed practices ($r=0.51$, $p=0.001$) regarding medico-legal responsibilities in patient care among staff nurses. The majority of socio-demographic variables were found not significant association except age and clinical experience in years with the level of awareness, qualification, area of working and exposure with legal issues with the level of attitude and age, qualification, clinical experience in years and job satisfaction with the level of expressed practices found significant association regarding medico-legal responsibilities in patient care among staff nurses respectively. **Conclusion:** is concluded that nurses lack in awareness, need to have favourable attitude and adequate expressed practices regarding medico-legal responsibilities in patient care to provide quality care. Nurse administrator should conduct an In-service programmes to improve staff nurses' level of awareness, attitude and expressed practices to avoid legal issues in patient care.

Index Terms: Awareness/ knowledge, Attitude, Expressed Practices, Staff Nurses, Medico-legal Responsibilities, Patient Care.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nursing practices comes under both public law as well as civil law. Nursing is legally sensitive as it deals with human beings. Nurses must follow legal rules to protect themselves and patient safety too. Nurses must be alert, conscious and knowledgeable enough to deal with patients in all aspects. There are many medicolegal cases seen in health care sectors i.e., assault, battery, domestic injuries, poisoning, chemical injuries, burns, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, illegal abortions, suicides, undiagnosed death, death due to hospital or medical negligence's, death within 24 hours of hospital admission, drug overdose, drug abuse, death on operation table, fire etc. The common legal responsibility in nursing is always abide to their ethics, safe keeping of all medical records, follow patient rights, be accountable and responsible for their actions, should have state nursing council registration, never delay in diagnosing of patient, follow standard policies and protocols of hospital and always do documentation of events. These actions will help in safe practices in nursing.¹ every year millions of people die in the hospitals due to human error, in throughout the globe including developed countries like us (0.44 to 0.98 million) and in developing countries like india (about 5.2 million). That is not because of lack of medical & nursing skill or knowledge of doctors and nurses, rather it was happened by medical error in team coordination and communication during an emergency and about 70% of death occurs due to the negligence and major reason behind this was human errors. [raksha shetty, the toi, march 3, 2016.] Nowadays many young generations aspiring for nursing profession but, they lack in legal knowledge in their profession. Nurses works for health promotion, restoration and maintenance, because the nurses are accountable for their judgement and action so they must be aware of legal aspects related to their profession in dealing with human being. In the earlier days nurses' mistakes were neglected and avoided but nowadays they are being punished for their negligence's and malpractices under consumer protection act. The consumer protection act enacted in 1986 in india which also includes the medical negligence's and illegal medical practices towards patient care. The first nursing law was created in north carolina in the us (permissive licensure for nurses) in 1903 and it evolved and expanded over the years to make nurses understand about their scope of practice.²

Nursing care errors can cause loss of life of patient, time, workforce, resources, reputation of hospital as well as nursing profession and cancellation of nursing registration under state council for further nursing practice.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

“A descriptive study to assess the awareness, attitude and expressed practices regarding medico-legal responsibilities in patient care among staff nurses working in selected hospitals of Jodhpur.”

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the awareness, attitude and expressed practices regarding medico-legal responsibility in patient care among staff nurses.
- To find out relationship between awareness and attitude and expressed practices regarding medico-legal responsibility in patient care among staff nurses.
- To find out association between awareness, attitude and expressed practices regarding medico-legal responsibility in patient care and selected socio-demographic variables among staff nurses.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Research Approach: The quantitative research approach is selected for this study.

Research Design: Non-experimental cross-sectional descriptive survey design was used.

Research settings: The study was conducted in Shriram Multi-speciality Hospital and Surgical Centre, Jodhpur & Raj hospital, Jodhpur. This setting was selected because of availability of the sample, feasibility of conducting study, geographical proximity and ethical clearance.

Research Variables: Here in this study, the research variables are awareness, attitude and expressed practice regarding medico-legal responsibility in patient care.

Population: In this study population was all staff nurses working in the Shriram multi-speciality hospital and surgical centre, Jodhpur and Raj hospital, Jodhpur.

Sample Size: In this study, the sample consist of 75 staff nurses out of them 40 were selected from Shri-Ram Multi-Speciality Hospital and Surgical Centre, Jodhpur and 35 were selected from Raj hospital in Jodhpur.

Sampling Technique: A non-probability purposive sampling technique is used to select the sample.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF SAMPLE:

INCLUSION CRITERIA

- Staff nurses working in private hospital with minimum 1 year of Clinical experience.
- Staff nurse who were willing to participate in the study.
- Staff nurses who were available at the time of data collection period.
- Staff nurses who could read and write English.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- Staff nurses who had below 1 year of Clinical experience.
- Staff nurses who were not working in private hospitals.
- Staff nurse who were not willing to participate in the study.
- Staff nurses who were not available during data collection period.
- Staff nurses who could not read and write English.

III. TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

SECTION 1: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

First section that consists of the items for obtaining the information about the socio- demographic profile of the participants including age, gender, qualification, religion, marital status, monthly income, area of work, work experience, sources of information criteria of profession selection, job satisfaction and exposure of any legal issues.

Section 2: Structured awareness questionnaire

This questionnaire was designed to assess the awareness regarding medico-legal responsibility in patient care. It was composed of 25 multiple choice questions. The subject was asked to choose correct answer from 4 choices of each question. Questionnaire included medicolegal responsibilities in admission & discharge, transfer, documentations and nursing actions used in patient care. Each correct answer was given with a score of 1 and each wrong answer with a score of 0. The total score of the tool ranged from 0-25 and then it was converted into percentage. The higher scores indicate higher level of awareness. Awareness score of staff nurses represented three groups below 50% was considered as need to improve, 51% -75% considered as moderately adequate, >75% score considered as adequate level of awareness regarding medico-legal responsibilities in patient care.

Section 3: Structured attitude scale

A 5-point Likert scale was developed by the researcher to assess the attitude regarding the medico-legal responsibilities in admission & discharge, documentations, transfer and nursing actions in patient care. The subject was asked to rate the 5 levels of attitude ranged from 1 to 5; 5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= neither agree nor disagree (uncertain), 2= disagree, 1= strongly disagree. This questionnaire included positive and negative item questions. The reverse scoring was used for the negative statements. The possible total score ranged from 25 to 125 and then it was converted into percentage. The higher score indicates favourable attitude regarding medico-legal responsibilities in patient care. Total score of attitudes were categorised into 3 levels, below 50% considered unfavourable attitude, 51%- 75% considered moderately favourable and >75% considered as favourable attitude.

Section 4: Structured expressed practice questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was design to assess the expressed practices regarding medico-legal responsibilities in patient care. It consists of statement with dichotomous option Yes or No. Practice elements included the basics of medico-legal responsibility, admission & discharge, transfer, documentation and nursing actions towards patient care. In checklist correct answer was score as 1, wrong answer was score as 0. The total practice score ranged from 0-25 and then it was converted into percentage. The higher score indicates adequate level of practice. The total score was categorised into 3 levels; below 50% considered as need to improve level of practice, 51%-75% considered as moderately adequate level of practice and >75% considered as adequate level of practices.

Content Validity: A prepared tool with statement objective, hypothesis, operational definition, blue print and a criteria checklist was given to 5 experts all were from the field of medical surgical nursing. It consists of 3 criteria relevant, needs modification and not relevant. A remark column was provided for each item, where experts could give their suggestion remark.

Reliability: The reliability of the research instrument was established by using split half method and it was calculated by using Karl Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient. The reliability r was $r=0.71$, $r=0.7$ and $r=0.76$ for the structured awareness questionnaire, attitude scale and expressed practices questionnaire respectively, which showed that the tool was reliable.

Data collection: A formal written permission was obtained from the administrators of private hospitals at Jodhpur prior to data collection. The study was carried out in the same way of pilot study. The actual data collection period was from 11th August to 11th September 2020. The investigator gave the questionnaire to 40 samples in Shriram hospital and 35 in Raj Hospital, Jodhpur to fill it. Informed consent was taken prior to filling questionnaire by each participant. Confidentiality was assured to the participants. The average time taken by participant for filling questionnaire was 25-30 minutes. At the end, investigator thanked to each participant for their participation and cooperation.

Data Analysis. The data obtained from the 75 samples would be analysed by inferential and descriptive statistics as follows

- Socio demographic data would be analyzed by using descriptive statistics i.e. frequency and percentage
- Awareness, attitude and expressed practices regarding medico-legal responsibility would be analyzed by using descriptive statistics i.e. frequency, percentage, mean, mean percentage and SD
- Karl Pearson's Coefficient of correlation used to analyzed the relationship between awareness, attitude and expressed practices.
- Association would be analyzed by using non parametric chi-square test.
- Data would be presented in the form of tables and diagrams.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings Related to Demographic Data:

This section deals with the sample characteristics under study, reveals that out of 75 samples most of data showed that majority (54.66%) of the samples were in age group between 20 to 30 years, most of samples were (58.66%) females, majority (65.33%) of the samples were GNM, majority (37.33%) of the samples were working in ward, majority (52%) of the samples were having less than 5 years of clinical experience, majority (40%) of the samples had information through In-service education, majority (54.66%) of the samples choose this profession due to their personal interest, majority (70.66%) of the samples were satisfied with their job, majority (70.66%) were not had any exposure with the legal issues in their practices.

B. Findings related to Mean, SD & mean percentage of Awareness, attitude and expressed practices regarding medicolegal responsibilities in patient care.

This section shows that the awareness score of staff nurses according to the different aspects of Medico-legal responsibilities in patient care. Awareness was highest (79.33%) regarding the transfer of patient with the mean of 2.38 ± 0.8 , followed by 74.66% regarding admission and discharge with the mean of 2.24 ± 0.83 , 67.57% regarding nursing actions with the mean of 4.73 ± 1.61 , 58.16% regarding basics of medicolegal responsibilities with mean of 3.49 ± 1.39 and 57.5% regarding documentation with mean of 3.45 ± 1.3 in patient care. Overall mean score is 16.3 ± 3.97 with 65.2% mean percentage. staff nurses had moderately favourable attitude towards medicolegal responsibilities in patient care with the mean of 88.45 ± 8.43 and mean percentage 70.76% & staff nurses had moderately adequate expressed practices regarding medicolegal responsibilities in patient care with the Mean \pm SD is 18.32 ± 3.56 and mean percentage 73.28%.

Table 1: Aspect wise mean awareness scores regarding Medico-legal responsibilities inpatient care among staff nurses

(N=75)

Sr.no.	Awareness aspects	Maximum score	Respondent awareness		
			Mean	SD	Mean %
1.	Basics of medico-legal responsibilities	06	03.49	1.39	58.16%
2.	Admission & discharge	03	02.24	0.83	74.66%
3.	Transfer	03	02.38	0.80	79.33%
4.	Documentation	06	03.45	1.30	57.50%
5.	Nursing actions	07	04.73	1.61	67.57%
Overall awareness		25	16.30	3.97	65.20%

table 2: mean, sd & mean percentage of attitude regarding medicolegal responsibilities in patient care

(N=75)

Mean	Standard deviation	Mean percentage
88.45	08.43	70.76%

table 3: mean, sd & mean percentage of expressed practices regarding medicolegal responsibilities in patient care

(N=75)

Mean	Standard deviation	Mean percentage
18.32	03.56	73.28%

C. Correlation between awareness, attitude and expressed practices regarding medicolegal responsibilities in patient care

The study findings shows that there was a significant moderately positive correlation found between the awareness and attitude ($r=0.41$, $p=0.001$) and attitude and expressed practices ($r=0.63$, $p=0.001$) and awareness and expressed practices ($r=0.51$, $p=0.001$) regarding medico-legal responsibilities in patient care among staff nurses.

D. Association Between Level of Awareness Regarding Medicolegal Responsibilities in Patient Care and Selected Socio-Demographic Variables:

Majority of socio-demographic variables such as gender ($X^2=7.049$; $p=0.29$), qualification ($X^2=8.906$; $p=0.179$), area of working ($X^2=4.802$; $p=0.779$), sources of information ($X^2=3.116$; $p=0.927$), choice of profession ($X^2=5.517$; $p=0.479$), job satisfaction ($X^2=3.216$; $p=0.781$) and exposure to legal issues ($X^2=3.067$; $p=0.216$) is found not significant association with the level of awareness regarding medicolegal responsibilities in patient care among staff nurses at level of significance $p \leq 0.05$ except age ($X^2=16.383$; $p=0.012$) and clinical experience in years ($X^2=21.643$; $p < 0.001$).

E. Association between level of attitude regarding medicolegal responsibilities in patient care and selected socio-demographic variables:

Majority of socio-demographic variables such as age ($X^2=10.467$; $p=0.106$), gender ($X^2=1.503$; $p=0.472$), clinical experience in years ($X^2=6.193$; $p=0.185$), sources of information ($X^2=8.538$; $p=0.383$), choice of profession ($X^2=9.568$; $p=0.144$) and job satisfaction ($X^2=7.241$; $p=0.299$) is found not significant association with the level of attitude regarding medicolegal responsibilities in patient care among staff nurses at level of significance $p \leq 0.05$ except qualification ($X^2=20.48$; $p=0.002$), area of working ($X^2=22.51$; $p=0.004$) and exposure to legal issues ($X^2=7.165$; $p=0.028$).

F. Association between level of expressed practices regarding medicolegal responsibilities in patient care and selected socio-demographic variables:

Majority of socio-demographic variables such as gender ($X^2=0.160$; $p=0.923$), area of working ($X^2=7.128$; $p=0.523$), sources of information ($X^2=4.603$; $p=0.799$), choice of profession ($X^2=5.281$; $p=0.508$) and exposure to legal issues ($X^2=9.021$; $p=0.11$) is found not significant association with the level of attitude regarding medicolegal responsibilities in patient care among staff nurses at level of significance $p \leq 0.05$ except age ($X^2=14.29$; $p=0.027$), qualification ($X^2=17.003$; $p=0.009$), clinical experience in years ($X^2=14.710$; $p=0.005$) and job satisfaction ($X^2=13.535$; $p=0.035$).

CONCLUSION

The present study findings reveal that nurses possess moderately adequate level of awareness, moderately favourable attitude and moderately adequate level of practices regarding medicolegal responsibilities in patient care. There was a moderately positive significant correlation between awareness, attitude and expressed practices. Majority of socio-demographic variables were found non-significant association with level of awareness, attitude and expressed practices at level of significance $p \leq 0.05$. From the present study it is concluded that there is a need to improve the nurses level of awareness, attitude and practices towards the medico-legal responsibilities in patient care to provide quality patient care to raise standards of nursing services and avoid the medico-legal issues as well as for the safety of the staff nurses.

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