



Empathy - an essential virtue of a dialysis nurse

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Kracow, 10th September 2017

Introduction

- The empathic ability of health care professionals is considered an important factor in improving the quality of care.
- Some studies conclude that empathy offers healthcare professionals the ability to improve patients health since the quality of their relationship, can affect the treatment and outcome. Empathy and empathic communication are key components that are now widely recognized for delivering good quality health care.
- Naturally, patients prefer not only to be cared by a well-trained hemodialysis nurse but by a well-trained and empathetic nurse.

Objectives

The objective of the study was to determine the empathic capacity of the nursing staff and to evaluate the patients' satisfaction related to nurses knowledge and empathy.

Methods

- To achieve these objectives, the study team of 2 dialysis unit of a large network, conducted a self-evaluation test in November 2016 with 10 questions regarding everyday working life and type of behavior of nurses among the nursing staff to determine their degree of empathy and, through introspection examination, provide individual improvement suggestions. Therefore, another questionnaire was provided to patients in January 2017. The goal was to determine whether patients consider their nurses to be well-prepared, competent, and above all empathetic.
- In December 2016, a monthly nurse meeting was implemented in order to promote work efficiency and discuss project improvements. In May 2017, two meetings with a psychologist were integrated in the staff training to deepen the understanding of the nurse-patient relationship.
- Finally, in order to evaluate actual improvements after six months, another test was conducted in June 2017 both with nurses and patients.

Conclusions

From the first collected data we can see how nurses' empathy can decrease over time; therefore it is crucial to re-raise their awareness for the necessity of empathetic care. By means of the self-evaluation test and subsequent corrective actions, we were able to achieve improvement in the empathetic behavior of all nursing staff which was confirmed by the patients' positive response. However, larger controlled studies are required to further investigate this topic.

In fact, empathy is an essential virtue for a dialysis nurse, because each patient is first and foremost an individual.

**Thank You Very Much
for Your Attention!**

Acknowledgments

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