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Knowledge and practices of dementia among nurses in a private healthcare institute in Sri Lanka

Thumbowila CL*, Fathimath F, Randeniyage S, Sameera AGLA

Department of Nursing, International Institute of Health Sciences, Sri Lanka.

Background: Worldwide, 50 million people have dementia and there are nearly 10 million new cases every year. Living with dementia has a tremendous effect on a person socially, psychologically and practically. Nursing care is critical in meeting needs and promoting quality of care.

Objective: Aim of the study was to assess the knowledge and practice of dementia among nurses.

Method: A cross-sectional quantitative descriptive study was conducted among 100 private and government sector nurses following a degree at a healthcare institute in the private sector, between the ages 18-60 years, through a self-administrated questionnaire (in-house). Data was analyzed by using SPSS 25.0 statistical package.

Results: Out of 100 participants, 93% were females. 14% had dementia patients in their family and 71% had no experience with personal caring, but 61% had gained professional caring experience. Only 18% got trained in caring for dementia patients. The majority (86%) correctly identified the definition of dementia. Awareness of the correct types of dementia, signs and symptoms, and the causes of dementia were 80%, 72% and 78% respectively. Half of the population was aware of correct dementia treatments, while 46 % believed that psychotherapy will benefit. 50% believed that dementia patients are more prone to get depression, while 40% believed that dementia patients should live in nursing homes. Considering practices, 66% used the correct method of communication. A greater percentage showed the positive aspects in the practice of care, 50% responded by showing photos, 18.2% with brief explanation, and 16% in offering correction and suggestion as the management. The majority suggested that splitting the activities into simpler task would be greatly aid.

Conclusion: The Majority expressed positive aspects of dealing with dementia patients. A satisfactory level of knowledge was identified, but there is a need in improving the practices among nurses.