Effect of Self-Learning Module (SLM) on Knowledge Regarding Legal Aspects of Nursing Care among Nurses

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Every nurse must demonstrate safe and appropriate clinical practise in order to practise nursing care within legal regulations. It is essential to have up to date knowledge on legal implications of nursing care, to practice safe care. This study was performed to assess the effect of self-learning module (SLM) on knowledge regarding legal aspects of nursing care among nurses working in primary health centres(PHC).The Quantitative approach with one group, pre and post test design was used in this study. Fifty nurses working in primary health centres were selected using convenient sampling technique. A self – learning module (SLM) developed which refers to an independent learning material generated systematically by researchers on legal elements of patient care, such as admission and discharge procedures, protecting confidentiality, informed consent,

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common laws, and torts relating to patient care. The results show that the increase in knowledge level was significant at p = 0.001 in the post test. The gender (p =0.05) and academic qualification and previous knowledge on legal aspects of patient care was significant at p = 0.01 level.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nursing is a compassionate practice with a direct impact on the lives, health, and well-being of individuals, families, and communities [1]. Both ethical and legal concepts influence the nursing profession as tools for professional discipline, giving the nurse a general idea of what is expected of her as she transitions from the safe environment of school into society [2]. The knowledge of nurses on law is necessary because nursing is concerned with providing services that affect human life and health, and some of the situations that a nurse encounters in practice pose dilemmas that, if not handled properly, can have negative consequences for the client and everyone involved. As a result, standards must be established to aid the nurse in conducting herself appropriately, making suitable decisions, and taking measures that are appropriate and safe for the client, thereby protecting herself against litigation [1].

Nursing practice is regulated to guarantee that nursing standards and scope are maintained in order to establish safe practices [3]. Clinical judgement is used in the delivery of care to help individuals to improve, maintain, or receive health, cope with health problems, and attain the highest possible quality of life [4]. Practical efficacy and ethical concern must be given equal weight in nursing practice [2]. Apart from the interactive aspect of nursing practice, documenting of nursing activities is critical since it serves as legal tender for any nursing interaction or care. Documentation in Nursing is frequently viewed as a legal matter that the nurse must approach with extreme caution [5].

Health care is at the centre of several other legal challenges. Patients nowadays are better educated, have higher expectations for the treatment they receive, and are more aware of their rights. Nurses have key responsibilities within a health-care team, including providing treatment, making decisions, and ensuring patient confidentiality. Nurses may be challenged with legal and ethical difficulties as a result of modern technology. Furthermore, the laws, norms, and regulations that regulate nursing practice have an impact on the interaction between the nurse and the patient.

Despite the fact that nursing law and ethics are clearly crucial in healthcare, there are little scientific evidences to show how well-versed nurses are in this area. In a developing country like India, not every hospital has a continuing nursing education cell, and ethical and legal issues are often overlooked. However, scientific and technological advancements are raising public awareness. As a result, nurses working in hospitals must keep up to date on current ethical and legal issues in patient care. Hence, this study was undertaken to assess the effect of self-learning module (SLM) on knowledge regarding legal aspects of nursing care among nurses working in primary health centres (PHC), so that the nurses can have better knowledge and decision making ability on patient care.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The quantitative approach with one group, pre and post test design was used in this study among 50 nurses working in primary health centres of a selected district of Tamilnadu. The samples were selected using convenient sampling technique. A self – learning module (SLM) developed which refers to an independent learning material generated systematically by researchers on legal elements of patient care, such as admission and discharge procedures, protecting confidentiality, informed consent, common laws, and torts relating to patient care. The tool was developed and it consisted of two sections such as socio demographic variables and structured knowledge questionnaire to assess the knowledge of nursing students regarding the legal aspects of patient care. The content validity of the tool was obtained from the experts from the field of nursing. The reliability of the tool was assessed after the pilot study by internal consistency with Cronbach Alpha test. The 'r' value of the tool was 0.78.

The pre-test was conducted through the self administered questionnaire followed by the SLM regarding legal aspects of nursing care. The doubts of nurses regarding the content on legal

aspects and it's practical implications, it was clarified to the participants on the same day of the teaching. After 2 weeks, the posttest was conducted. The analysis of results was done by descriptive and inferential statistics.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The majority of the subjects (64%) were under the age of 25 years, 72 % were female nurses and only 28% were males. In terms of educational status, 42% had diploma General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM), 52% had Bachelor of Sciences in Nursing, six percent had Master of Sciences in Nursing degree. The distribution of respondents by clinical experience revealed that 86% had less than 5 years of experience and 14% had more than 5 years of experience.

According to the Table 1, the nurses with excellent knowledge increased from 12% to 84% after the SLM among the nurses. The nurses

with average level of knowledge were only 2% after the self learning module compared to 22% in the pretest. The level of increase in knowledge was significant at p = 0.001 level. Similar findings were reported in few studies [6,7] which conclude that the in-service education has significantly improved the level of knowledge of nurses.

It is widely understood that ethical and legal principles lead the nursing profession, since they are the tools for professional discipline that provide the nurse with a broad understanding of what is required of her by society. Nurses face ethical and legal issues as a result of social developments such as the right to healthcare, rising healthcare costs, and contradicting institutional regulations. According to a research finding [4], 77.6% of Nigerian nurses are unaware of legal aspects of nursing practice. Similar study findings were reported in a study [8], in which the nurses had moderate level of knowledge on the legal and ethical aspects of nursing practice.

Table 1. Distribution of level of knowledge of nurses on legal aspects of nursing care

Score range	Percentage (%)		P -values
	Pretest	Post test	
Excellent (16-20)	12	84	18.41; p=0.001 ***
Good (11-15)	14	14	
Average (6-10)	22	2	
Poor (< 5)	52	0	
Total	100	100	

Table 2. Association of post test knowledge with socio – demographic variables of nurses

Socio-Demographic Variables	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	
Age					0.91 (NS)
21 -25	71.4%	14.2%	14.2%	0	
26 -30	100%	0	0	0	
31 - 35	88.9%	11.1%	0	0	
>35	78.3%	21.7%	0	0	
Gender					0.041*
Male	91.7%	4.17%	4.17%	0	
Female	77%	23%	0	0	
Previous knowledge on Legal aspects of Patient care					0.01**
Yes	96.6%	3.4%	0	0	
No	66.7%	28.6%	4.7%	0	
Educational Qualification					0.01**
Basic degree	66.6%	16.7%	16.7%	0	
B.Sc	88.2%	11.8%	0	0	
M.Sc	84%	16%	0	0	
Years of Experience					0.841(NS)
< 5 years	66.7%	33.3%	0	0	
> 5 years	93.8%	3.1%	3.1%	0	

Similarly, a research conducted among nurses at a tertiary care hospital in rural India found that the majority (78 percent) of the participants lacked appropriate knowledge of nursing legislation and ethics. Staff nurses' knowledge of legal and ethical aspects of patient care has to be improved, as this will improve in their critical thinking capacity and decision making when faced with legal and ethical challenges [9]. Frequent need based training to be given to all the nurses to improve their knowledge, attitude and practice by which the quality of health care can be improved.

There was no statistically significant relationship between knowledge level and age and years of experience of the nurses. The gender (p =0.05) and academic qualification and previous knowledge on legal aspects of patient care was significant at p = 0.01 level. A study conducted in India (2016), found a substantial link between knowledge level of nurses with their demographic variables such age, gender, professional qualification, and experience [9,10]. Nurses working in general wards have a higher degree of expertise than those working in specialty wards, according to this study, which is similar to a study conducted in Eastern Nepal's Tertiary Care Hospital [11]. As the academic qualification and previous knowledge on legal aspects of nurses have significant relationship with level of knowledge, it is clearly evident that there must be regular seminars or workshops on this area to empower the nurses towards legal and ethical aspects of nursing care.

4. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the SLM improves the level of knowledge of nurses on legal aspects of nursing care though they had less knowledge in the pretest. Hence, the need based education to be explored and given to the nurses so that it can improve the quality of nursing care to the patients.

5. FUNDING

CONSENT

The consent was obtained frorn all the respondents after explaining the whole process of the study and their freedom of withdrawal from the study at any point of time.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The ethical permission was obtained from the institutional review board.

DECLARATION

The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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