NURSING MANAGEMENT OF PATIENTS WITH BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

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Abstract

The aim. The purpose of this service learning project was to develop innovative and effective strategies for nurses caring for patients suffering with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) to improve patient outcomes.

Background. Patients suffering from BPD represent 10% of psychiatric outpatients and 20% of psychiatric inpatients (APA, as cited Bland, Williams, Scharer & Manning, 2004). The condition affects approximately 2% of the population and is defined under Axis II of the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual). BPD is characterized by impulsive acting out with self-mutilating behaviour, emotional dysregulation, impairment of social functioning with unstable relationships and is widely regarded as one of the most debilitating forms of personality pathology (Bornstein, Becker-Matero, Winarick, & Reichman, 2010). Nursing staff are at the forefront in the care and management of the stormy and turbulent behaviours associated with this condition. It is therefore important for nurses to have support and guidance regarding this difficult-to-care-for group of behaviours in patients for the purpose of best practice.

Design. This service learning project started out with my own lengthy personal experience and keen interest in dealing with patients with BPD, followed by an extensive literature review. This foundation was followed by discussions around guided questions with experienced practicing nurses and/or those with keen interest on this subject. A clinical practice guideline was developed from these sources of evidence.

Method. An extensive literature review by a computerized search using EBSCO, CINAHL, MEDLINE, PSYinfo, and PubMed databases with footnote chasing, including the grey literature, was conducted, followed by discussions with ten purposefully selected nurses using predetermined guiding questions. All data were analysed using qualitative content analysis.
**Results.** The findings suggest the increasing need for education, support, and clinical leadership for nursing staff in the care and management of this growing group of patients. The service learning project resulted in the formulation of a practice guideline to assist nurses who face the challenges frequently associated in the decision-making processes towards effective outcomes. The project also identified areas of much needed nursing research in dealing with this difficult problem for nurses and the healthcare system.

**Conclusion.** Nurses caring for patients with BPD require extra guidance and clinical support, vital for their knowledge and confidence, as they work to improve patient outcomes. Further education and supervision would be helpful, but further studies are required to design appropriate education curriculum and to define the kind of support required.

**Relevance to practice.** This Service Learning Project provides a practice guideline that serves as an algorithm to guide frontline nurses in the decision-making process for intervention strategies in the management of the very challenging and difficult-to-manage behaviours that are frequently presented by patients with BPD.