

Final Essay

Why Is Psychology Important in Nursing?

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The combination of nursing and psychology addresses the emotional and physical welfare of patients; the mind and the body are interconnected in a way that cannot be denied. While many professions require some level of psychology none probably do so more than that of a nurse or doctor. It is an insightful tool which assists in the daily care of nurses with their patients, their families and other hospital staff members. By implementing the principles of psychology into their patient care nurses provide a more tailored and personal patient plan fostering greater benefits and outcomes.

From the moment a patient walks through the door of any health care facility it is safe to assume they are already distressed about their physical wellbeing; nurses are the first line of defense, responsible for making the patient feel at ease and instilling realistic optimism for a successful recovery. Applying elements of psychology helps nurses gain a deeper understanding of human behavior therefore providing valuable insight into the patients' minds and in turn creating a stronger bond between the nurse and the patient and the nurse and the patient's families. Effective communication skills aid in all facets of life and relationship building; it breeds trust. Lovers, friends, siblings, people regardless of gender, age, race etc., humanity thrives in a world where we can express ourselves and are able to communicate with one another.

A nurse who understands a patient's needs, and knows how to best communicate with them, is a huge relief to both them and their families. When a family witnesses' great interaction between their loved one and their nurse, it puts them at ease all the while strengthening that bond and instilling trust. Psychology and nursing go hand in hand, each adding to the other more depth and context. This relationship goes both ways.

In philosophical discussions, theories, and innovative research by renowned theoreticians, Watson, Leininger, Boykin, and Swanson, ‘caring’ is defined as the essence of nursing and is the key element of effective, high-quality nurse–patient interaction. Person-focused care, combined with safety and quality of basic care, establishes worldwide initiatives that empower and reflect the importance of interactions between health care professionals and their patients. A substantial body of evidence validates that both patients and nurses have expectations about the nature and importance of caring relationships.

Mental health issues have been found to be risk factors for a multitude of physical diagnoses; anxiety is linked to heart pressure problems and heart disease; depression and schizophrenia have been found to affect the body’s resistance to insulin, placing them in a higher risk bracket to type 2 diabetes. Physical diseases can also lead to mental health issues such as in chronic illnesses like depression found common in patients with multiple sclerosis, cancer, and Alzheimer’s disease. (<https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/how-does-mental-health-affect-physical-health#091e9c5e821528b4-1-2>)

When creating care plans, one has to consider every aspect of a patient’s health — both physical and emotional, because very often, the two are tied closely together. It is therefore obvious that recognizing the relationship between the mind and the body and understanding their principles would result in better outcomes in patient health from diagnosis to treatment to recovery. Psychology is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes. Behavior includes all our outward or overt actions and reactions, such as talking, facial expressions and movements.

Mental processes refer to all the internal, covert activity of our minds, such as thinking, feeling and remembering.’ (Ciccarelli & Meyer 2006). A nurse who applies elements of Psychology better

understands attitudes, how to deal with conflicts, knows how to foster positive thinking, means of applying crisis intervention; has acquired better communication skills, all which help provide quality integrated patient care. If a patient walks in with anxiety, a nurse who has studied psychology would be able to determine his mental state, how to approach and address it and implement a health care plan tailored accordingly. Nursing entails much more than charting and notetaking; nurses often become the patient's support system and advocate.

The application of psychology in nursing promotes better interactions with their patients. It assists in addressing patients of different genders, ages, and backgrounds. It helps make proper patient assessments. Understanding and being able to evaluate your patient's emotional state leads to making more educated decisions about a health care plan that addresses all their emotional and physical needs. Trust and a feeling of psychological safety makes them feel more comfortable with treatments or tests, which eases the situation for everyone involved. For example, in the article, *The Importance of Psychology in the Nursing Profession*, the author explains how a nurse with a background in child psychology would have an advantage interacting with a young child; she has a clearer understanding of his emotional needs and knowing how to communicate accordingly alleviates the patient's apprehensions and fosters trust.

In the study, *Patients', and Nurses' Perceptions of Importance of Caring Nurse-Patient Interactions: Do They Differ?* A total of 446 respondents were included in the research (291 patients and 155 registered nurses). The translated and standardized 70-item version of the Caring Nurse–Patient Interactions Scale (CNPI-70) was used to collect data. According to the overall CNPI-70 scale, there was a significant difference in patients' and nurses' perception. Patients scored caring nurse–patient interactions significantly higher (4.39) than nurses (4.16). The questionnaire used was based on Watson's Caring Theory, developed by Cossette, Cara, Ricard,

and Pepin, 2005. The rapport between nurses and patients, and the patient's need to feel cared for both mentally and physically is of utmost importance for the patient's overall satisfaction.

Patients still traditionally consider a nurse's role to be centered on meeting their physical needs; and while it is unlikely, they have expectations for emotional care, it certainly is equally as important to them, especially when they are experiencing trauma. According to these studies and research, patients find it relevant to be cared for by a nurse who inspires hope and is compassionate, helpful, and has an optimistic attitude, yet keeps everything in perspective. Talk, explain, teach, and inform are the most common active verbs used when describing conversation with patients.

Several studies have shown the beneficial effect of training communication skills on the improvement of these skills, both in health professionals (nurses included) (Moore et al., 2018) and in nursing students (Mullan and Kothe, 2010; Xie et al., 2013). Therefore, communication skills should be a central concept in nursing training, especially during undergraduate education (McCarthy et al., 2014; Mullan and Kothe, 2010). The study of psychology regards communication as playing a significant role in the understanding of the human mind and emotions and is therefore a special skill set most agree is advantageous for nurses to possess. In this line, the National Association for Practical Nurse Education and Service (Wishes and Marshall, 2007) and the American Nurses Association (2010) highlight the importance of developing effective nurse patient communication in undergraduate and postgraduate education.

There have been many studies that demonstrate the advantages of nurses with psychological backgrounds. Nurses and psychology are diversely separate fields that are interrelated and interdependent. Supporting evidence shows considerable variations in the capacity to which psychology is incorporated in the nursing curriculum, suggesting a need for further

discussion and research. A search of various databases and analysis of emerging psychology for nursing textbooks were used in one particular study. The three topics most used in the literature was the relevance of psychology in the nursing curriculum; depth and content of coverage; and whether integrated or separate teaching of psychology should be chosen.

The findings were that while the overall relevance of psychology to nursing education is undebated, there is still discussion on how to best approach and integrate psychology. These studies have been hampered by lack of empirical evidence. Empirical evidence is information that is acquired by observation or experimentation and is used to prove or disprove a hypothesis.

It is obvious that psychology is used in our everyday lives, regardless of our profession. We as human beings implement it in the simplest ways without even being aware of it. Psychology helps us understand how humans think and behave while communicating with others. It teaches us how to be better and more effective communicators. It helps us build better relationships because it plays a key role in the comprehension of human actions; it enriches careers, instills self-confidence and as nurses it gives us a special skill set.

It plays such an important role in our work as health care professionals whose job is to be responsible for managing the individualized patient care by promoting and restoring patients' health through the nursing process; collaborating with physicians and multidisciplinary team members; providing physical and psychological support to patients, friends, and families; and more importantly we are promoters of optimum care, lovers of life, empathizers and compassionate, understanding and patient human beings whose goal is to restore the health of all our patients. We know how to deal with people of all ages, genders, and backgrounds; and using psychology is in the best interest of all, especially the patients.

Imagine where we would be today if psychology were not implemented in our everyday lives. As a nurse we would not be able to recognize the emotional needs of our patients; without doing so would make us more prone to err when constructing a patient health care plan; we would not be able to provide the moral support our patients are often in need of. There are so many things that would not be possible without implementing the principles of psychology. I am continuing my studies in psychology. I find the mind most fascinating, and I desire to utilize it to the best of my ability because I know it will make a difference and impact people's lives for the better.

In conclusion, I personally identify with the fact that building a strong nurse-patient rapport is of utmost importance. I am more productive, have a better attitude, am more patient and compassionate, and overall, a better nurse when I connect with a patient on a mental and emotional level. Therefore, it is my belief that psychology plays a significant and frequent role in our everyday lives, especially those in the healthcare profession. We established that physical health often manifests in the mental state of a patient and the mental illness in the physical. Having a psychological background would better aid us as healthcare workers in properly assessing and addressing our patient's health care needs.

Studies show that such caring interactions contribute to the sense of patients' security and reduced frequency of repeated hospitalizations. Although the importance of nurse-patient interactions is recognized as the basis of high-quality care, the priorities of contemporary health care are still task implementation and cost reduction, attaining greater satisfaction with health care provided without additional financial investments. But in my eyes...psychology and nursing will always be married. And don't be fooled, while it may not be expected, connecting on an emotional level and being able to express one's feelings, their fears, hopes, the negative and the positive and

having a compassionate, understanding, caring nurse that one trusts matters equally and has a lasting impact on the patient. The great American poet, Maya Angelou described it best,

“They may forget what you said, but they’ll never forget how you made them feel.”

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