

Empathy in Nursing Clinical Practice

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In Medical and Nursing science, empathy is defined as the therapist's ability to understand the patient's emotional and mental characteristics as if they were the same person. The therapist's goal is to empathetically recognize the patient's physical or mental pain and be able to intervene therapeutically. The word empathy consists of the words: in, plus and sensation that compose the therapist's sense beyond himself [1].

Empathy is the identification of the therapist with the mental state of the patient and the understanding of his behavior. Empathy is a communication tool that validates the world as perceived by the patient. The relationship between nurse and patient is based on the nurse's ability to combine empathy and respect for the patient before treatment is even applied. Empathy is defined by four characteristics: moral, emotional, cognitive and behavioral. Empathy is the nurse's skill that includes: the patient's sense of the inner world as if it were his own, sensitivity to his current emotions and verbal communication, all in a language understood by the patient [2].

Yang, *et al.*'s research examined whether nurses' empathy is able to reduce the use of isolation and restraint in psychiatric patients with a history of aggressive behavior, and whether systematic nursing empathy training can enhance this effect. A total of 1,098 patients were studied over the course of a year regarding the effect of nurses' empathy. The results of the study showed the correlation between the reduction of isolation and the use of restrictive measures of patients with high levels of empathy of nurses [3].

Hooker, *et al.* confirm through their research that empathy is an important component of human relationships. There are neural mechanisms that facilitate empathy. Empathy is defined as a process that could be called simulation or "mirroring". In this function they proved that a wide neural network is involved [4].

Parvan, *et al.* explored the empathy of nursing students. The measurement tool used was the La Monica Empathy Profile. The results showed that when there was no verbal communication, contact with the patient was not effective. On the other hand, nurses were not always able to control their anxiety and at the same time could not show empathy [5].

To improve the empathy skill they recommended specialized training Moghaddasian, *et al.* aimed to assess the empathy of nurses from the perspective of patients' families in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). 418 individuals were selected from the families of patients admitted to the ICU. The findings showed that most of the nurses had a high level of empathy. There was a statistically significant relationship between nurses' empathy and meeting the needs of patients' families [6].

Empathy is one of the most important skills in clinical practice, especially in the field of oncology as reported by Rohani, *et al.* as it contributes to patient care. Empathy helps patients' emotions to be perceived and expressed more easily. It can help in planning interventions in these patients. The aim of this qualitative study was to investigate nurses' empathy for cancer patients. 15 oncology nurses were

the sample. The personal interview was the tool of the study. The conclusion of the study is that empathy as an effective skill can and must be taught in the context of caring for cancer patients [7].

The research of Latimer, *et al.* aimed to investigate the effectiveness of nurses' empathy in dealing with infant pain. The Empathy for Infant Pain (EIPvp) tool compared pain empathy rates for nurses and non-nurses during a 24-hour video of infants undergoing medical procedures. Fifty participants (25 nurses and 25 health care providers) rated the level of infant pain at the Empathy for Infant Pain (EIPvp). The Empathy for Infant Pain (EIPvp) has been validated as an educational program and is promising for educational and research purposes [8].

Latimer, *et al.* conducted another study to determine whether Nurses in Pediatric Intensive Care Units (ICUs) are exposed to pain in children, are desensitized to pain, and show low empathy. The sample consisted of 27 nurses of Pediatric Intensive Care Units (ICU) and 27 health professionals from other departments. Participants underwent an MRI scan this time while assessing the pain of children and adult patients in a series of videos. The results of the research showed that the nurses of the Pediatric Intensive Care Units (ICU) had significantly higher levels of empathy but also higher levels of burnout than other health professionals [9].

Campbell-Yeo, *et al.* conducted a literature review on whether empathy can also be harmful to nurses. Previous studies have reported that empathy is a learning behavior that can be controlled and thus avoided unpleasant consequences. The results of their study, however, showed that empathy is an autonomous function and cannot be completely controlled [10].

This has significant consequences for nurses' health and can lead to burnout. Richardson, *et al.* conducted a literature review on care, compassion and empathy in Nursing. They wanted to understand the issues of teaching and learning these concepts to nursing students. The results showed that these skills can be taught and in fact there are tools available for measuring them to nursing students during their education [11].

The study by Gholamzadeh, *et al.* aimed to investigate the training in the skills of empathy in nursing students and their attitude towards the elderly. The sample consisted of 63 students of Hazrat Zeinab Nursing and Obstetrics School, in Iran. The results showed that the empathy skills training program had a significant impact on students' average scores as there was an improvement in empathy and attitudes towards older people. They recommended the training in empathy skills in the Nursing curriculum [12].

Chen, *et al.* examined the empathy of Nursing students in a simulation program with elderly patients. Simulation programs, they say, can be used to help students understand the experiences of others, but also provide information about healthcare. The sample of convenience included 58 Nursing students from the United States. The students played the role of an older adult during a 3-hour simulation program, the Geriatric Medication Game® (GMG). Students' empathy for the elderly has improved significantly. Improvements were also observed in attitude and understanding of health care. Students do not know the feelings and experiences of the elderly. Simulation programs, such as Geriatric Medication Game® GMG, can be a useful tool for cultivating empathy during the education of Nursing students [13].

The purpose of Penprase, *et al.* was to prove whether empathy is the reason for choosing Nursing by men in relation to male students of other schools. The results showed that male Nursing students compared to the general population of other male students had significantly higher empathy. Male nurses not only provide care to patients but have problem-solving skills in complex environments and organizational and design skills for the implementation of nursing care [14].

Nursing Empathy leads to a better understanding of the patient's emotion and contributes to the holistic treatment of his condition. Further studies are needed to highlight the positive effect of Empathy in Nursing, within interdisciplinary team.

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