

Safe nursing care, moral distress and sensitivity of nurses



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BACKGROUND

Moral distress affects safe health care. The nursing staff are emotionally challenged on a daily basis in the pursuit of safe nursing care for their patients and their families by carrying their own personal ethical dilemmas and traumas.

METHODS

Literature review was performed in Google Scholar using as key words: Moral distress, moral sensitivity nurse.

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RESULTS

Work-overload, the individuality of and criticism from patients, attendants or fellow nurses, the lack of support from the hospital environment, the ambiguities in their duties, the frequent shift-changes, the daily contact with human suffering and death, staff shortage can reduce moral sensitivity and exaggerate moral distress. These causes can also jeopardize safe nursing care.

DISCUSSION

Nurses in order to be effective in providing safe care must develop their moral sensitivity thought mental endurance, positive thinking, self-confidence, resourcefulness, flexibility and responsibility, which can also be a barrier on the emergence of moral distress. Moral sensitivity is considered as the antidote to moral distress which also leads to safe patients care. There are protective mechanisms that develop moral sensitivity and lower the intensity of moral dilemmas and impasses. These are humor, ethics, and perception, creativity, building relationships in a climate of trust and security, gaining initiative with increasing experience, recognition of moral distress and nursing institutional efforts to reduce future moral distress.