



Anorexia Among Adolescents: Different Challenges in Nursing A Literature Review

Abstract

Anorexia nervosa is a condition that falls under the category of psychological illnesses. It is one that is characterized by an obsession to lose weight. However, rather than taking safe measures, a person who is suffering from this condition usually refuses to eat. The usual onset of this condition happens between 14 to 18 years old. As of the moment, there seems to be an expanding weight loss culture, with anorexia nervosa becoming an increasingly controversial issue in the field of nursing. While it is a topic that has been widely researched, the writer discovered that there is only a limited research, particularly regarding the difficulties that nurses face when caring for anorexic adolescents.

The purpose of this review is to discover the challenges that are presented to different nursing staff while taking care of an adolescent who is suffering from this condition. The literature review was performed by searching different databases, including PschArticles and PubMed. The articles which were gathered covered dates from 1999 to 2012. Some articles were chosen as part of the literature review.

Introduction

Anorexia Nervosa, referred in this review as 'AN', may be characterized as a psychological condition which is manifested by an obsession to lose weight. This is typically done by refusing to eat (Sarah & Slovek, 2010). There is a yearly incidence of 10 different cases of AN for every 100,000 females, and 0.5 among males. The usual onset of AN happens between 14 to 18 years old. It is a serious illness with 20% mortality rate among chronic patients. It has also been suggested that it comes as a result of a sense of denial within the AN population, thus leading to later presentation. The patient does not accept any type of diagnosis, minimizing the implications of the condition, ultimately refusing treatment. On top of that, for patients who are dealing with AN, there is a sense of self-worth after achieving thinness. As a result, the patients may view treatment as a way to control and being resistant to care. At the same time, giving care for a patient may be challenging to any nursing staff.

Search Method

A literature review was conducted by searching databases, including PschArticles and PubMed. The terms used for searching included "anorexia nervosa", "anorexia", "nursing care", "family therapy", "weight restoration", and "adolescent" were used in order to gather related articles for research.

Therapeutic Relationship

Patients who are dealing with AN do not see themselves worthy of expressing their emotions (Fayne, 2011). The emotions are often seen as something that is wrong or bad, thus evoking feelings of shame and fear as a result. Different eating disorders may be used as a mechanism to cope in order to block emotions, using food restriction in order to control, and eventually deal with challenging and painful emotional conditions that are felt by the person. Patients who are anorexic often deal with difficulties when it comes to expressing themselves, thus frequently ending up with showing compulsive traits, as well as in striving to achieve perfection. Failon et al. (2003) also describes patients with AN as conflict avoiders, turning their anger to themselves. As such, an eating disorder may develop as a way of controlling anger in a way which does not need it to be communicated. In turn, it may be challenging for nurses to deal with the patient who appears null of emotional expressions. Thus, establishing a therapeutic relationship which is a vital component in treating an anorexic patient, may turn out to be challenging.

In a study of Turner & King (2002), difficulties were identified when it comes to establish rapport with a patient suffering from AN. For this, in-depth interviews were performed with 5 nurses in a public hospital Australia so as to discover the experience of nurses who are handling adolescent female anorexic. The nurses did not have any background in mental health, but had already cared for other anorexic patients during the period of 6 months. The study suggests that in order to ensure optimum compliance and effective care with nursing intervention, creating a therapeutic relationship together with the patient is very important. This kind of relationship should be one that is built on trust, reliability and compassion.



It also suggests that continuous care may be of greater importance. With this, regular staff meetings may enable for consistent care. The study found, however, that patients may turn out in compliant with care, and are untrustworthy and dishonest, which may cause some difficulties in establishing a therapeutic relationship. The patients were also found to be untruthful, deceitful and not able to nurture a relationship built on trust due to avoidance of emotion. In result, the nurses found it quite difficult to stay non-judgmental, building a report together with the patient.

More evidence were also found to support the overall importance of a consistent and individualized approach towards care. The phenomenological study used semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the study was to offer a very detailed description regarding the inpatient experience of adolescents who are suffering from anorexia. The study focused on the fact that patients simply want to be viewed as especially unique characters who have different emotional needs, and not just as a standard anorexic patient.

Conclusion

This literature review purposes to explore on the challenges faced by nursing staff when it comes to taking care of an adolescent patient who is suffering from anorexia nervosa. Overall, it is highly evident that a patient who is dealing with AN can prove to be a challenge to any nursing staff. However, by continuously building on a trusting relationship, care compliance can also be improved.

References

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