

ROLE OF THE NURSE WHILE CARING PATIENTS WITH DEMENTIA

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Introduction

In 1947, India got independence, the average life expectancy of an Indian was 32 years by that time. After the decades medical science got advancement and implementation of family planning is successfully gained, due to this crude birth rate and death rate declined a gradually with average life expectancy of Indians gained up to 68 years. However, living longer did not mean living with maximum quality of life because of increasing numbers of lifestyle related chronic non-communicable diseases incidence.

Dementia is one of non-communicable disease of elderly with high morbidity and mortality. Dementia is neurodegenerative disease of multifactorial etiology, dissimilar presentation, and different prognosis. This neurodegenerative disease is characterized by decline in performance and cognitive impairment in various domain and affects capacity of doing activity of daily living. While Alzheimer's Society in 2014 stated that, many patients with dementia live independently or with minor support. In such cases nurses education places greatworth on the attitude and skills needed for best practices to perform activity of daily living.

Etiology of developing Dementia:

The risk of developing dementia increases with advanced age. People with learning and cognitive disability are more vulnerable to develop such disease. Therefore, client with dementia often have some co-existing problems or disease. Moreover, other neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease, Huntington disease and few types of multiple sclerosis are responsible for developing dementia. Person with any neurovascular problem, neuro-infections and chronic alcohol or drug abuser has higher chances to develop dementia.

Spotting Dementia:

A vital aspect of nurse's role is to observe and report any potential manifestation of dementia in the patient. This helps in early identification of diagnosis which leads to better treatment choices and advance decision making. The identification process is complicated because of mixed factors such as dementia, delirium and depression has overlapping manifestations which can be tough to differentiate. If the patient is having following sign and symptoms like anxious, feeling of loneliness, loss of appetite, agitation, and patient is asking some questions repeatedly, this condition could be delirium, depression or dementia. Nurse who is observant, empathetic and trusted by patient are ideally placed to identify such disease. Clients with dementia will feel secure with a trusted and familiar nurse, and more comfortable to ventilate feelings like, providing proper information about their worries, allow the nurse to assist them with the activity of daily living. This suggesting that identification and care of the patient with dementia is very crucial task for nurses.

Role of nurse in medication administration:

Few medications has been invented which are useful in slowing the progress of dementia. At present there are no any appropriate treatment is available to cure dementia. While administering medications to patient, it's nurse's responsibility to explain effect, side effect, dose of the drugs to patient and their relatives. Nurses should also know from where the patients and family members can find further details of medicine. Internet is common source but those who are not having such facilities they should guide to local agency, who is providing information regarding drugs.

Nurse should have proper knowledge regarding action of medications. It's useful especially when patients and their family members are asking any queries. The cholinesterase inhibitors used to treat dementia which is acting by preventing the breakdown of neurotransmitter acetylcholine; needed for cognitive functions. The medication memantine works differently, by disrupting the release of toxic levels of glutamate, which is responsible to damage the brain cell.

Patients with dementia often face trouble in taking medications due to poor short term memory. In such cases sometimes they forgot to take medicine or they will take medicine twice. While administering medication to dementia patient, nurses should properly observe the patients that whether they are taking medications or not. And store the remaining medications in nurse's lockers.

Patients who having diabetes mellitus with dementia are very vulnerable patients. Due to short term memory patients are not memorizing whether they had meal or not before taking hypoglycemic agents. This can leads to critical condition such as severe hypoglycemia and leads to coma. This is responsibility of nurse to feed patient before administering hypoglycemic medications.

Role of nurse in maintain physical health of dementia patient:

Nurse should ensure that dementia patients are receiving adequate fluids and nutrition, performing exercise, and able to go to the toilets normally. Involve patients in conversations which enhance their memories and orientation. Provide hearing aids or glasses if needed. Physical and emotional wellbeing are very closely linked to each other. For example if the patient with dementia who is having abdominal pain due to constipation, which leads to mood instability, irritability and low mood. Such patients are unable to express their pain verbally so this is responsibility of nurse to identify such physiological factors.

Role of nurse for maintain effective communication with dementia patient:

The therapeutic relationship is base for providing high quality nursing care. Communicating slowly, properly and providing appreciations and individual recognition will aid the patients to enhance the communication. Few measures can be taken to improve issues with short term memory like, using simple and short sentences, using familiar words with warm tone and smiling during conversation.

Provide adequate time to reply and listen carefully if the speech is unclear. Nurse should avoid the questions if the patient is unlikely to answer the questions. In advanced stage of disease where memory has deteriorated further, patient may call for their mother or insist to perform some task. Nurse should ensure their presence with the patient and make them to feel comfortable. Use of therapeutic touch is very essential while communicating with such patient.

Nurses should learn to understand the behavior of patient with dementia. Identifying how these patients are feeling can help nurse to empathize and respond accordingly. When patients are unable to communicate, their feeling and behavior provides clue about their feeling and needs.

Role of nurse for adjusting environment for the dementia patient.

Hospital is quite noisy and crowded place therefore it's difficult for people with dementia to cope with. Environment can be used to provide practical clues to the patients like labeling the toilet. Whether in the hospital or home, adjusting the surroundings can result in a more dementia-friendly environment. This includes: providing peaceful place to the patient with plenty of light, the furniture and surrounding of patient's area should be safe and use light colors, and provide orientation signs like bathroom, toilet and kitchen areas. Photographs can be placed nearby the patient with labeling with name which is useful to them to identify a person. Place water and food near to patient's bed so it is easily reachable through the patient.

Role of nurse in providing personal care to patient.

Most of patients are uncomfortable to expose their self to the strangers. While giving personal care to the patient use warm and gentle approach and ensure patient's body is covered. It is also important that constantly one staff nurse should look after the patient so they can easily recognize the nurse and trust will be intact for providing personal care. Distractions or relaxation techniques can be used while providing personal care to the patient.

Role of nurse in providing support to the patient's family.

Families of patient will feel highest level of stress. Nurse should provide them enough psychological support. Nurse can take help of social service or any voluntary organizations for providing support which includes further community nurse visit. The nurse should consider wellbeing of family as well as patient.

Conclusion:

Providing care to the patients with dementia is very challenging. Managing patients with dementia requires endurance, empathy, patience, sensitivity and dedication. It is important that nurses look after themselves and each other via peer support and mentoring, and extend this support to multidisciplinary colleagues. The skills nurses are developing while caring with dementia patient, these should consider as professional strength.

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